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Issue 374

# WebUser

1 - 14 July 2015

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messing up your system

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**40**

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# Show Google who's boss

**N**ot so long ago, everything bearing the Google brand seemed beyond question, and though we're not so dazzled by the company these days, we still wouldn't get far on the web without it. Try forsaking all Google products and services, and you'll only be making things difficult for yourself. In this issue's cover feature on page 40, we reveal how to iron out some of Google's imperfections and show the web behemoth that you're the one in control. We've rounded up our favourite hacks to make Google's tools work how you want them to and put you back in the driving

seat (and we don't mean in one of Google's self-driving cars!).

A common criticism of Google is that it wants to know exactly where you are and what you're doing at all times "to make things easier for you". On page 46, we explain how to stop personal info being leaked from your phone and give you the power to tell Google and other nosy parkers to mind their own beeswax.

**Robert Irvine**  
[robert\\_irvine@dennis.co.uk](mailto:robert_irvine@dennis.co.uk)  
[#webuser](#)



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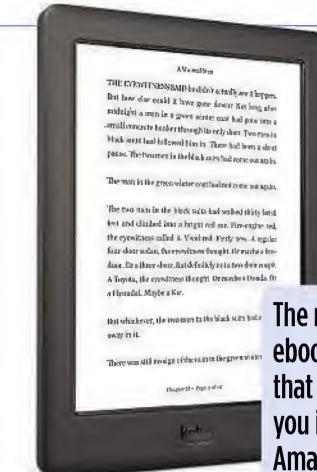
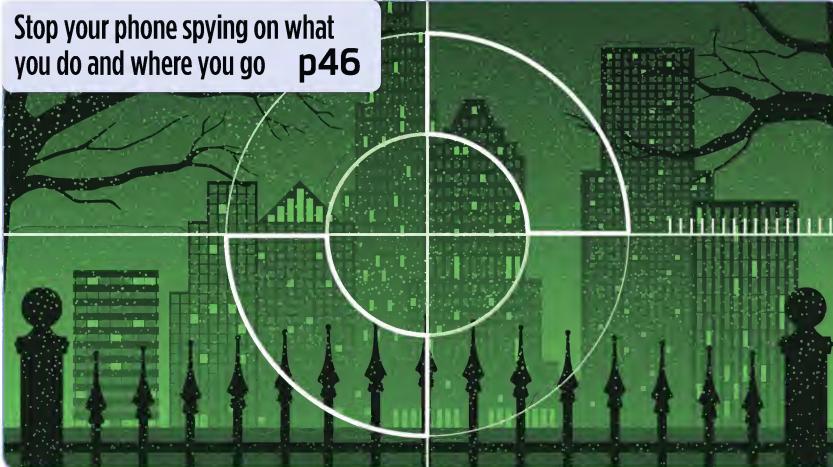
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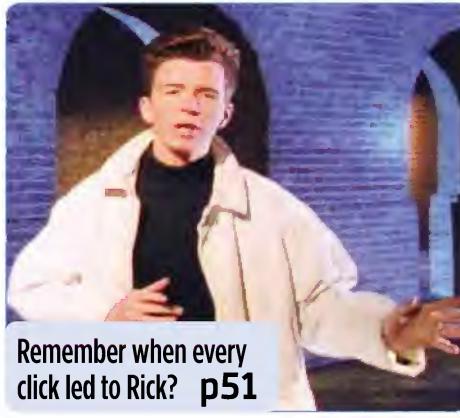
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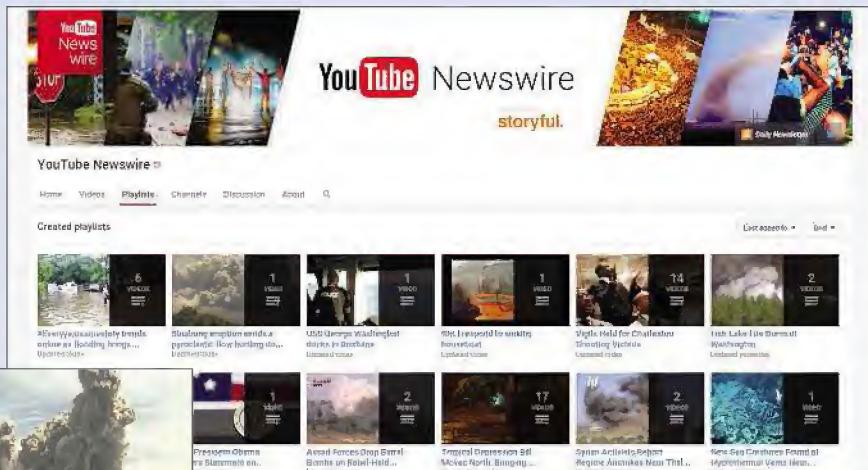


# What's New Online

## Watch eyewitness news on YouTube

Broadcasters, including the BBC, Sky and CNN, now regularly use videos uploaded by YouTube users in their reports, so we're surprised it's taken this long for YouTube to launch its own news service. YouTube Newswire gathers footage from around the world in a curated feed of the most noteworthy eyewitness videos of the day".

Google's partner on the project, social-news agency Storyful ([storyful.com](#)) verifies each clip, presumably to counter pranksters and political propaganda, and Newswire offers both global and regional feeds to deliver relevant content to different countries. A daily newsletter delivers the best new clips straight to your inbox, while you can



also follow Newswire on Twitter ([@ytnewswire](#)). When we visited, the big story was the Charleston church shooting, with one amateur clip showing gunman Dylann Roof being escorted from the police station. Other

footage included the eruption of Mount Sinabung in Indonesia (pictured) and the RNLI rescuing a sinking houseboat off the coast of Newhaven Harbour. Newswire is a fascinating way to get your news from the source, rather than filtered through news outlets.

## Tour the Star Wars galaxy in 3D

[bit.ly/star374](#)

Spend some of the time between now and 18 December (when the new Star Wars film arrives) exploring this fantastic 3D map of the Star Wars galaxy, featuring planets, moons and the Death Star. It takes a while to load, but once it's ready, you can take a tour by clicking the bottom-left Play button. Clicking the Layers icon at the top adds elements to the map, such as Princess Leia's home planet of Alderaan after it was destroyed by the Death Star (boulders floating through space!). Much of the information the map uses as inspiration comes from Wookieepedia ([starwars.wikia.com](#)), which is possibly the best-named website on the internet.



## See animal selfies from the Serengeti

[www.snapshotserengeti.org](#)

This curious vulture is one of thousands of animals that have been photographed as part of Snapshot Serengeti, a project to capture images of the wildlife of the region. In 2010, scientists set up 225 motion-sensitive cameras, ending up with 1.2 million photos, of which 322,000 contain animals going about their daily business, and in some cases moving in for a closer look at the lens.

Over 28,000 volunteers studied the images to identify species and catalogue animal behaviour. With their work now done, the researchers have left some photos online for you to look at, so you can help the research by adding details of what you see. To begin, click the red 'Start classifying' button at the bottom of the homepage, then follow the tutorial to learn what you need to do. Along the way, you'll get to know a host of baboons, elephants, lions, wildebeest, ostriches, giraffes and many other animals.



We highlight 10 of the most amazing and amusing things you can do on the web this fortnight

## Give your photos an instant retro makeover online

[bit.ly/film374](http://bit.ly/film374)

New website Film Emulator is a quick way to give your photos a retro feel. You don't need to download any software or even register. Just upload a photo, select a filter then download the edited photo back to your PC. You can fine tune the vibrancy, brightness, contrast and saturation, among other effects. Here, our Editor has undergone a '60s faded' transformation.

## View sunrises and sunsets in Instagram

[bit.ly/sunrise374](http://bit.ly/sunrise374)

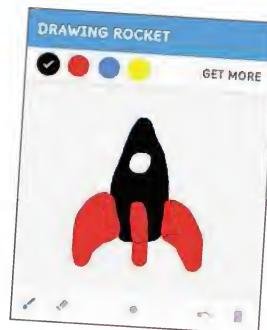
It's no surprise that stunning photos of sunrises and sunsets are among the most frequently shared images on Instagram. All Our Suns provides a visualisation of all these sun shots in the form of two global maps: the first shows a 24-hour time lapse view of pictures tagged #sunrise and #sunset being uploaded to Instagram across the globe, while the other lets you explore the photos themselves.



## Play doodle game in Facebook Messenger

Remember Draw Something, the Pictionary-style app that was briefly popular a few years ago? You can now play

a similar free game, called Doodle Draw, as you chat within the Facebook Messenger app. Once you install the game (available for Android at [bit.ly/droid374](http://bit.ly/droid374) or iOS at [bit.ly/apple374](http://bit.ly/apple374)) you'll find it in the 'overflow' menu, accessed using the three horizontal dots at the bottom of the chat screen. It's no doubt the first of many games appearing for Messenger since it was opened up to outside apps in March.



## Unravel the storylines of BBC dramas

[bit.ly/story374](http://bit.ly/story374)

Get instant answers to your questions about BBC dramas with new online tool Story Explorer. It traces storylines and characters across long-running series, and has been launched to promote Radio 4's new First World War drama *Home Front*. It's currently a BBC Taster project, but the Beeb plans to expand it to map out the tangled histories of *EastEnders* and *The Archers*, too.



## 5 TO FOLLOW ON TWITTER

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Former West Ham, Spurs and QPR boss Harry Redknapp imparts his football wisdom

**@Tesco**

The supermarket's Twitter feed is more fun than you might expect

**@JoannaLumley**

The *Ab Fab* actress has made a suitably dignified Twitter debut

**@PulpLibrarian**

Enjoy some shockingly tacky but lovingly curated paperback book covers from the 1950s

### Share landscape videos on Twitter

[bit.ly/video374](http://bit.ly/video374)

Twitter now lets you upload videos in landscape mode where previously it would trim them to portrait width. To use the new feature, tap the camera icon in Twitter's video app, then the red video icon, and turn your phone sideways.

### Get closing-time alerts in Google Maps

[bit.ly/maps374](http://bit.ly/maps374)

Google Maps for Android can now alert you if the place you're heading to will be closed by the time you get there.

### Use new emoji on your phone

[bit.ly/emoji374](http://bit.ly/emoji374)

The Unicode Consortium (see our FAQ in Issue 372) has approved 37 new emoji for Android, iOS and Windows Phone, including a unicorn, a robot, lots of sport emoji and the long-awaited 'face with rolling eyes'.

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Richard Cullen, Managing Director at bluebox

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# Need to Know

## Millions of web users let down by slow broadband speeds

### What happened?

A report by *Which?* magazine ([bit.ly/which374](http://bit.ly/which374)) revealed that three-quarters of UK homes aren't getting the top broadband speed promised by their ISP. The research suggested that as many as 15.4 million homes aren't able to get the speeds they are paying for, with only 17 per cent of homes getting the average speed that was advertised.

As usual with broadband, rural Britons are the worst off, with 98 per cent of homes unable to get the speeds promised by their ISP. For example, *Which?* said that only 4 per cent of TalkTalk users on the 17Mbps package could actually get that speed, although the ISP predictably disputed this, saying its own data was based on a wider sample than the consumer group's report. Additionally, the ISP claimed many customers actually get higher speeds than they're paying for.

*Which?* made a similar claim against BT, saying only 1 per cent of those on its 76Mbps package could actually get that speed. Again, the ISP disagreed, saying 10 per cent of its customers receive more than 80Mbps on average.

The conflicting claims highlight the difficulty with broadband advertising: it's very difficult for consumers to really know what speeds they can get before they buy. Under Ofcom rules, ISPs are supposed to ensure that at least 10 per cent of customers can get a certain speed before they're allowed to advertise it as their maximum "up to" speed. However, that means up to 90 per cent of those signing up may not get that speed at all.

The good news is that, as of 20 June, Ofcom has simplified the process of switching to a different ISP if you're unhappy with your current speed. Be aware, though, that you may face a charge to do so if you're still in the



minimum service period set out by your contract. Make sure to contact your ISP first before doing anything.

### How will it affect you?

If you are unhappy with your existing provider, consider making a change: even if the UK's broadband market doesn't necessarily offer top speeds for everyone, the high level of competition means you may well get a better deal or superior service by switching provider.

Under the previous system, moving ISPs involved contacting your existing provider to cancel the contract, obtaining a MAC code and giving that to your new supplier. Now, you need only contact the ISP you're switching to, although there's a 10-day notification process to give the new supplier time to end your existing contract, so it will still take a while to make the switch.

If you're changing ISP purely for financial reasons, call your existing provider first to see if they're willing to

match or beat the offer you've found. ISPs regularly offer customers a cheaper rate or an upgrade to persuade them to stay.

One concern with the new system is the increased risk of 'slamming', whereby dodgy sales people sign customers up for services without their consent – something that's theoretically now easier to do. Ofcom is forcing ISPs to track migration requests to crack down on such abuse, but it's still worth being aware of.

### What do we think?

Advertising broadband by speed is difficult because the same network could produce wildly different services to two different homes, and there's often nothing ISPs can do about it.

It would perhaps be better to advertise broadband by technology – fibre versus ADSL, for example – although this may make an already daunting process all the more confusing for less tech-savvy users.

It would also help if prospective customers could run a speed test before signing up, so they're aware of the true speeds they can expect in the real world rather than a theoretical maximum.

Although we're happy Ofcom has made it easier to switch ISPs, many Britons have no alternatives. If Virgin Media or another rival service hasn't laid down a network in your area, switching providers simply means moving to another ISP on BT's network, so little will change in terms of speed.

If you're in such a situation, we feel for you, but at the very least, make sure you're not paying for speeds it's impossible to get. We'll be taking a closer look at Ofcom's new switching rules in the next issue of *Web User*.



What we think of this fortnight's top tech stories and rumours

## Home is where the mobile signal isn't

### What happened?

Four in 10 of us have trouble getting a mobile signal in our own homes, according to a report by Global Wireless Solutions ([www.gwsolutions.com](http://www.gwsolutions.com)). The researchers compared mobile networks and found that one in every 14 calls made on EE failed, while Three dropped one in 20 calls. O2 and Vodafone fared much better, dropping only one call in 173 and one in 70 respectively.

Liverpool is the city with the most troublesome at-home mobile connectivity, with six out of 10 people saying their house is a blackspot, followed by Cardiff and Bristol. The worst room for 'hotspots' is the kitchen, which has the most failed calls and the lowest 4G penetration, the report said.

### How will it affect you?

If you struggle with mobile connectivity in your home, you're not alone – but you don't need to put up with it. Some rooms will always

be a problem for mobile signals, but there are solutions. Contact your provider and tell them if you're having trouble connecting. Some operators now have systems for making calls over Wi-Fi, such as EE's Wi-Fi Calling Initiative, while others will offer you a 'femto cell', a piece of hardware that extends your signal using Wi-Fi.

Other networks are taking action at a more technical level. For example, Three is offering a low-frequency service later this year to improve 4G inside homes.

### What do we think?

More and more of us are ditching our landlines in favour of mobile phones, so reliable coverage is essential – for many of us, it's the only phone we have. It's good to see mobile operators investing in improving their signals, but given the dire situation, it's clear they should have started sooner. Here's hoping we get better coverage soon.



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## Control iPlayer with your mind



### What happened?

The BBC unveiled a headset that lets users control its iPlayer catch-up TV app using their minds. The headset won't be available any time soon but, in tests, BBC staff were able to use the device to launch iPlayer and choose a programme to watch. The broadcaster worked with tech firm This Place to develop the headset, which reads brainwaves and is operated either by concentrating or relaxing the mind.

### How will it affect you?

We'd love to say the BBC will soon be able to read your mind and launch the right show in iPlayer, but

that's not likely to happen soon. As one tester pointed out, it's a lot slower than using a remote control, and the BBC is merely testing the idea for future consideration.

### What do we think?

The concept of selecting channels just by thinking about them may sound silly, but such controls have already been useful for disabled people who struggle to use traditional input methods. What we'd love to see is a headset that could analyse our mood and suggest an appropriate show to watch, such as a comedy when we're feeling glum.



# Microsoft flip-flops on 'free' Windows 10

### What happened?

Microsoft was forced to edit a misleading blog post, which suggested that anyone who installed the Insider Preview of Windows 10 would be entitled to a free upgrade to the new operating system on 29 July.

The original post on 19 June, by the head of the Insider program, Gabe Azul, said: "As long as you are running an Insider Preview build and connected with the MSA [Microsoft account] you used to register, you will receive the Windows 10 final release build and remain activated". This sounded like good news for Windows XP and Vista users, because it suggested that, provided they'd installed the Insider Preview through a Microsoft account, they'd be able to get Windows 10 for free.

Sadly, this was not the case and Microsoft quietly amended the blog post ([bit.ly/w10blog374](http://bit.ly/w10blog374)) the next day, but not before many tech news websites had reported that all Windows testers were eligible for the free upgrade. The corrected post emphasised that "only people running Genuine Windows 7 or Windows 8.1 can upgrade to Windows 10 as part of the free upgrade offer". It also affirmed that you *don't* need a Microsoft account to install the final version of Windows 10, unless you are upgrading from the Insider Preview.



### How will it affect you?

If you use Windows XP or Vista and read about Microsoft's post, you may have got excited about the prospect of a new, free operating system at the end of July. As it is, you'll need to pay a reported \$119 (£75) for Windows 10 Home or \$199 (£125) for Windows 10 Pro, although presumably the UK prices will be higher than a direct currency conversion, as per usual. If you're running Windows 7 or 8, you can relax because you don't need to do anything, not even register for Microsoft account.

### What do we think?

Gabe Azul at Microsoft should have considered the implications of his original post before raising and then dashing the hopes of XP and Vista users. Still, one advantage of online articles is that they can be swiftly edited to amend errors – we're pleased the correction was made before this issue of *Web User* went to press! It would have been nice of Microsoft to apologise for its mistake, but presumably it's currently focusing on ensuring that Windows 10 is perfect for its 29 July release.



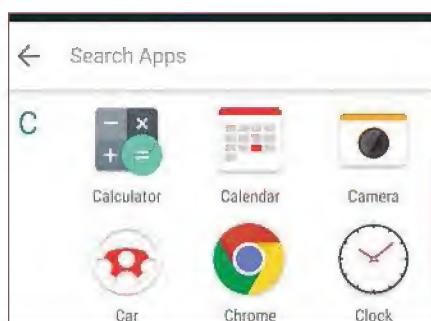
## FIRST LOOK

### Android M

[bit.ly/androidm374](http://bit.ly/androidm374)

Google has released a Developer Preview of the latest version of its mobile operating system. We installed it on a Nexus 6 so we could try out its new features. Whereas the previous version, Lollipop, involved a substantial redesign of the Android interface, M looks largely the same bar a slight colour change from light-blue to dark-blue graphics.

The most significant difference is a dramatic revamp of the app tray. Instead of scrolling sideways, it now scrolls vertically, with a search box and a list of four 'favourite' apps at the top, and a letter index running down the left-hand side of the screen. The latter makes it much quicker to locate the app you're looking for, but



organising your apps into alphabetical blocks leads to a somewhat ragged-looking list.

Sadly, this Developer Preview is missing M's most interesting new feature, 'Now on Tap', which will extend Google Now functionality to display information gleaned from apps you use on your phone or tablet.

Nevertheless, we did try the newly refined permissions system, which

usefully lets you refuse some app permissions while allowing others. This is a welcome change and one that should have been implemented a long time ago. We also like that apps can now be associated with specific websites to prevent all those annoying 'Open with' messages.

Best of all is Android M's new Doze feature, which boosts battery life by automatically disabling background processes when you're not using your device. We haven't tested M for long enough to see how well this works, but it certainly sounds promising.

Overall, though, M doesn't significantly enhance Android in the same way that Lollipop did. Perhaps by the time it gets a proper name (our money's on Marshmallow), Google will have added some more exciting features.



## WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

# Will banks let us use emoji as passwords?

Banking passwords with a minimum of eight characters, including at least one number and a capital letter, can be difficult to remember, so a British firm has invented a new way of logging into your bank account using emoji.

This means that your next bank password might well be smiley face, flower, top hat and sunglasses. That's the brainchild of Intelligent Environments ([bit.ly/intelligent374](http://bit.ly/intelligent374)), which claims passwords using emoji are more memorable and secure for smartphone banking apps.

The company has built emoji authentication into the Android version of its banking app. Customers have to remember their four-symbol sequence, picking them from a choice of 44 different emoji icons that are offered onscreen.

Intelligent Environments says choosing from the 44 symbols offers 480 times as many permutations as a four-digit passcode, and will be easier to remember.

However, there are a couple of notable drawbacks to emoji-based authentication. Firstly, it only works on touchscreens, meaning bank customers may still have to remember an



additional, conventional password or phrase if they want to perform telephone and PC banking. The other is the scope for confusion, because many emoji symbols look similar to one another – although with only 44 of the hundreds of available options to choose from, the company may be able to weed out potential duplicates.

### LIKELIHOOD RATING



Intelligent Environments says it is "currently in discussion with banks that are considering rolling the technology out to their customers within the next 12 months". Considering the current popularity of emoji, we think this idea could be a winner, especially if the company can get it to work on the Desktop, too.



## What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

### SoundBucket speakers

[bit.ly/soundbucket374](http://bit.ly/soundbucket374) | From £125

Enjoy music on the beach, in the park or in your back garden with a SoundBucket portable speaker. Available in 10 "exciting" colours, this compact Bluetooth device offers a 50 hour battery life and a maximum output of 2 x 30W. You can stream songs from your phone, tablet or PC, including streaming services such as Spotify and Apple Music, and control the volume wirelessly. Just remember to respect your neighbours and don't go blasting your bucket at unreasonable hours.



## WEBOMETER



### WE LIKE...

#### ↑ Belgian smartphone addicts get 'text lanes'

Mobile-repair company MLab has painted white lines on the streets of Antwerp to create dedicated 'text lanes' for pedestrians who are too busy looking at their phones to pay attention to the people around them.



#### ↑ Google cracks down on revenge porn

As with the 'right to be forgotten' ruling, victims of revenge



porn will now be able to request that Google removes links to photos and videos of them from its search results, although the offending content itself will still appear online.

### WE DON'T LIKE...

#### ↓ Ripping CDs and DVDs to be illegal again

A High Court judge has overruled the change in legislation that lets you rip CDs and DVDs for personal use. Music industry organisations convinced Mr Justice Levy that the ruling was unlawful because it doesn't compensate rights holders.



#### ↓ Online reviews 'used as blackmail'

The Competition and Markets Authority has found that customers are 'blackmailing' companies by threatening to post bad reviews about them on sites such as TripAdvisor and Amazon, unless they are given money off.





# Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

## SECURITY ALERT! | What's been bothering us this fortnight

### WhatsApp criticised for poor data protection



A report by the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) has ranked messaging service WhatsApp as the worst web company for protecting its users' data. In the EFF's annual Who Has Your Back survey, WhatsApp scored only one out of five stars, compared to Facebook, which earned four, and Apple and Dropbox, which swept the board with five. WhatsApp lost points for failing to follow industry-accepted privacy practices, neglecting to tell users about government data requests and not disclosing its policies on data retention. Interestingly, Google and Microsoft only managed to score three stars, due to their lack of transparency about what they do with their users' data.

[bit.ly/whatsapp374](http://bit.ly/whatsapp374)

### LastPass tells users to change master passwords

Password manager LastPass has been hacked for the second time in four years. The company insists there is no evidence that users' details were compromised, and claims its strong encryption means thieves won't be able to crack most passwords. Nevertheless, anyone signing

in from a new device or IP address will now be emailed a verification link to confirm they are the genuine account holder, unless they already use two-factor authentication. Users are also advised to change their master password as a precaution.

[bit.ly/lastpass374](http://bit.ly/lastpass374)



### PATCH TUESDAY: June

There were two 'critical' security bulletins and seven 'important' ones in June's Patch Tuesday. One of the critical fixes patched vulnerabilities in Internet Explorer that could allow for remote code execution when viewing a specially crafted web page. The other resolved a flaw in Windows Media Player that could also allow for remote code execution when opening a media file downloaded from a dodgy site.

Other patches addressed

vulnerabilities in Microsoft Office, Exchange Server and Common Controls, and one affecting the Windows kernel that could allow an attacker to take control of your system using a malicious DLL file.

These patches should have been applied by Windows Update last month. You can check Windows Update is active on your system by going to Control Panel, 'System and Security', Windows Update.

[bit.ly/patchjune374](http://bit.ly/patchjune374)

## Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

**THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:**  
**Adam Winn, manager at OPSWAT ([www.opswat.com](http://www.opswat.com))**  
**discusses the threat of malware to hospitals**

**OPSWAT**

**Q** How are cybercriminals able to infect medical devices with malware?

**A** The standard of cyber-security varies dramatically among medical-device manufacturers. An opportunistic attacker can

use private research or public vulnerability notifications to identify targets. These can range from simple targets, such as unsecure passwords, to more complex ones, and the method used to infect the device will vary accordingly.

Medical devices can be used as an entry point in an otherwise secured network, because they usually contain some level of connectivity. Once the cybercriminal is inside the network, they can access valuable patient or research data.

**Q** Have there actually been any instances of malware infecting

**hospital equipment, or is it still theoretical?**

**A** Yes, and typically the infections are on devices running Windows. Unfortunately, it can take months to detect a breach, if it's noticed at all, so for every reported breach one can assume that there are many more times that number which have gone unnoticed.

**Q** With many hospitals still using Windows XP, should the government be investing more to upgrade medical hardware and networks?

**A** Windows XP is still used by millions of devices around the world, and will be around for years to come, regardless of government spending to accelerate upgrades. When it is not practical or possible to upgrade these systems, administrators must treat them with extra care, isolating them as much as possible on the network and avoiding internet connectivity wherever possible. If they must be internet connected, then isolation is key, as are robust hardware protection and compliance policies.



Power out. Game on.

#### BATTERY BACKUP HOME NETWORK

Simple, affordable power protection from APC™ by Schneider Electric™ keeps your computer, home entertainment systems, and WiFi connections safe and working, even if the power goes out.

Life Is On™



# Best New Websites

## Site of the Fortnight

ENTERTAINMENT

RELAUNCH

### Netflix

[www.netflix.com](http://www.netflix.com)

Considering that Netflix is the world's most popular streaming service for films and TV shows, its website has always been rather dull, akin to browsing the shelves in a gloomy video shop. Happily, it's been redesigned with a smarter, more modern layout that makes it easier to browse its huge selection of movies and series. The revamped site works more like the Netflix app so it feels instantly familiar. We particularly like that when you hover your mouse over a title, it now shows you a brief slideshow of images, as well as info such as the duration, user rating and year of production, and lets you play it instantly with a single click.

Our rating



**New Releases**

**SABOTAGE** **LOCKE**

**BROWSE**

Check out new releases or browse Netflix by genre

**KIDS**

Switch to Netflix Kids to keep young viewers entertained

**NETFLIX** **KIDS**

**WORLD Z WA**

2013 15 1h 56m When the zombie apocalypse descends, he protect his family – but his boss orders him to world.

+

MY LIST

Popular on Netflix

ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK

Trending Now

8 sense

**Muse**

**DAD ROCKS** great gift ideas for Dad Father's Day - Sunday 27 June

**new**

**RELANCE**

ENTERTAINMENT

### HMV

[store.hmv.com](http://store.hmv.com)

When HMV reappeared online 18 months ago, it was only as a digital store and magazine-style site, which disappointed many customers. Thankfully, it's now back selling physical products, including CDs, DVDs and Blu-rays, but in a more restrained manner than the old cram-everything-on-one-page approach. In fact, the design is so sparse that you'd be forgiven for thinking you can only buy new releases, when there's actually an extensive catalogue available. Frustratingly, the search function doesn't auto-complete queries and the site is very slow, although this may have been caused by an influx of former customers hoping to snap up cheap TV box sets!

Our rating



TwinsOrNot.net

TwinsOrNot.net

Two blokes 100% Child comment

**NEW**

PHOTO

### TwinsOrNot.net

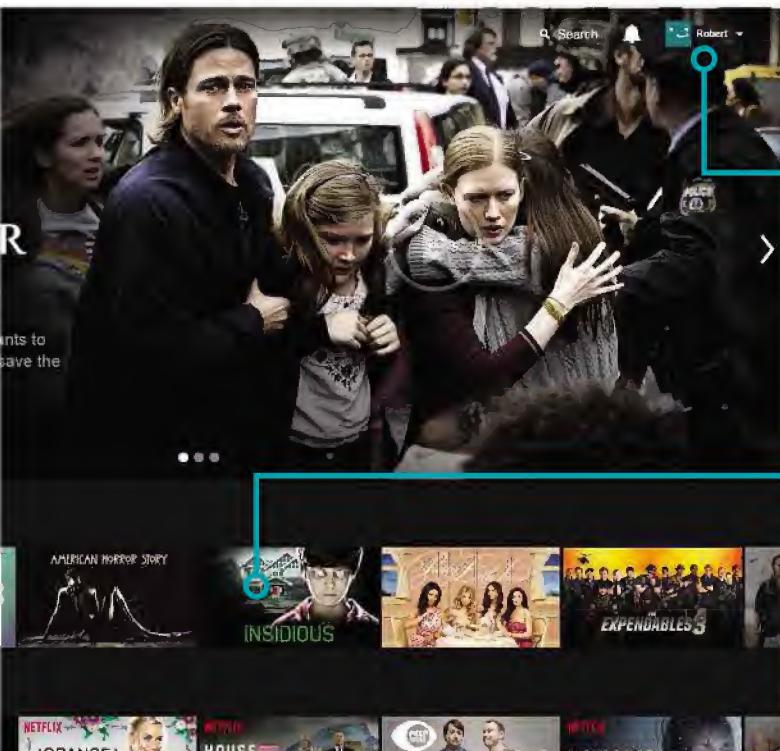
[twinsornot.net](http://twinsornot.net)

Microsoft's follow-up to its popular age-guessing tool, How-Old.net ([how-old.net](http://how-old.net)) lets you upload photos of two people so you can find out how similar their facial features are. The result is supposed determine whether one person is related to the other, with the site providing a resemblance percentage and a comment, such as: "probably not even from the same planet". As with How-Old.net, it's not very accurate - our Staff Writer was told he's not related to his brother - and gets snippy if you don't upload correctly: "Error: I need two photos. Not more, not less. Two".

Our rating



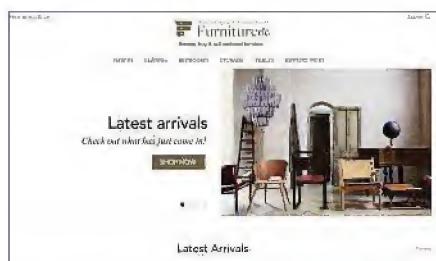
We review this fortnight's best new and relaunched websites and rate them for content, design and features



**PROFILE**  
Improve your recommendations by personalising your profile



**INFORMATION**  
View pop-up details of any title on the homepage



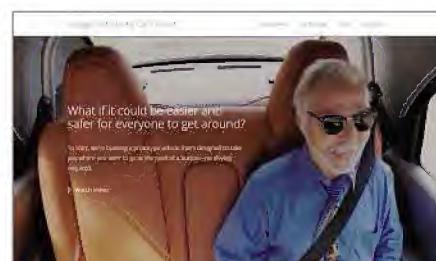
## HOME

### FurnitureEtc

[www.furnitureetc.co.uk](http://www.furnitureetc.co.uk)

This online marketplace for second-hand furniture (we refuse to use the term 'pre-loved') is so minimalist it's barely there, but it's a great way to find unusual items that add character to your home. You can browse categories including Seating, Bedrooms and Storage to buy stuff indirectly from third-party sellers; and either choose 'deluxe delivery' or collect the goods yourself for free. When we visited, items included an original church pew and a Victorian ship's strongbox. With its beautiful photos and immaculate design, FurnitureEtc is a far cry from eBay, although it's quite pricey.

**NEW**



## MOTRING

### Google Self-Driving Car Project

[www.google.com/selfdrivingcar](http://www.google.com/selfdrivingcar)

Following Barry's column about Google's self-driving cars in our last issue, there's now an official website that shows you the vehicles in action, both inside and out. The huge homepage video features human guinea pigs taking their first thrilling ride - "it has no steering wheel," observes one eagle-eyed lady - while an 'On the road' video explains more about how the cars are being tested. There's not much about the actual technology, but the FAQ provides a good overview of the project, and links to monthly reports about its progress, including accidents.

**NEW**



## CHARITY

### Care International

[www.careinternational.org.uk](http://www.careinternational.org.uk)

Bold, engaging and refreshingly direct, this website for the humanitarian and development organisation is a winning combination of style and substance. The image-led design immediately grabs your attention, and simple navigation makes it easy to browse articles about how Care fights poverty, and information about its current appeals such as those for the Nepal earthquake and South Sudan crisis. The presentation of content is superb, highlighting key points and using videos, photos and maps to optimum effect. Best of all, supporting and donating to Care couldn't be simpler.

**RELAUNCH**

Our rating



Our rating



# Best New Websites



ANGLING

## FishingInfo

[www.fishinginfo.co.uk](http://www.fishinginfo.co.uk)

With a promotional video starring Paul “aren’t fish brilliant?” Whitehouse, this relaunched fishing information hub is sure to reel in keen anglers. It covers everything from finding a venue (river, stillwater or canal) anywhere in the UK to checking river levels and buying a rod licence. Information is provided in a clear, concise manner with pleasantly chunky buttons for the important tools. You can also add your own custom venues to FishingInfo’s map and get all the latest angling news on the homepage. It’s an impressively comprehensive resource, whether you’re an experienced angler or still wet behind the ears.

RELAUNCH



TECHNOLOGY

## Ashampoo Blog

[blog.ashampoo.com/en](http://blog.ashampoo.com/en)

Companies often use blogs as a thinly-veiled tool for promoting their products, but Ashampoo Blog barely mentions its own burning, editing and optimising software, and instead takes a broader look at technology. Content is organised into Tech, Work and Life, which covers most bases and makes for easy navigation and a clean – in fact, spotless – design. Sadly, there were only three posts when we visited, but topics such as ‘The button that destroys your PC’ certainly lured us in, and the articles are both informative and well-illustrated. Hopefully, there will be more updates to the blog by the time you read this.

NEW



BANKING

## Lloyds Bank

[www.lloydsbank.com](http://www.lloydsbank.com)

Now a sleek black thoroughbred rather than a shabby old nag, the revamped Lloyds Bank website is faster, clearer and easier to use. Improved navigation lets you jump to any section of the site using drop-down menus, and the homepage has been redesigned to show essential tools and information. This includes putting the branch locator and ‘contact us’ details at the top rather than the bottom of the page; prominent links to online and mobile banking; and a handy Money Manager. Lloyds has ensured that most of the site now works equally well on any device, and plans to roll out this responsive design to all sections soon.

RELAUNCH

Our rating



Our rating



amazon anonymous

What Amazon isn't telling you

It's been another year of sales for Amazon. That's what CEO Jeff Bezos will tell shareholders at the company's annual meeting in Seattle on 10 June. But that's not the whole story. There's the story for the thousands of Amazon workers who make the whole Amazon machine tick – without fail day, shift or night, come rain or shine.

Here's the story Amazon doesn't want you to see. Share it far and wide.

Share on Facebook Share on Twitter

WhatAmazonIsn'tTellingYou

NEW

ETHICS

## Amazon Anonymous

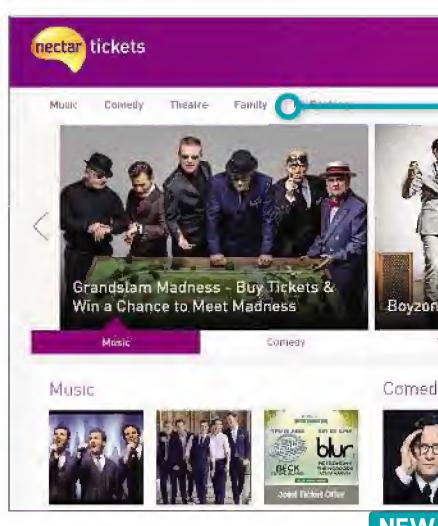
[www.amazonanonymous.org](http://www.amazonanonymous.org)

Inspired by a petition calling for Amazon to pay its workers the living wage, this campaign site brings together “different strands of opposition” to the online giant. You can watch a video exposé entitled ‘What Amazon isn’t telling you’; read anonymous stories from Amazon’s UK workers about warehouse conditions; join a ‘recovery programme’ to take action; and send a ‘treat workers fairly’ message to Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos. It’s eye-opening if one-sided stuff but, *Downton Abbey* GIFs aside (Amazon sponsors the series), the site would carry more weight if it didn’t look like it was thrown together in five minutes.

Our rating



Our rating



TICKETS

## Nectar Tickets

[tickets.nectar.com](http://tickets.nectar.com)

Members of the Nectar loyalty scheme can now save money on theatre, music, comedy and family events through this new tickets site. Before you get too excited, note that you need to earn 500 points (by spending £500 in Nectar partner stores) to get a measly £2.50 discount, which may be gobbled up by the delivery fee. To compensate, there are exclusive deals offering as much as 50 per cent off popular shows. Booking tickets is easy, and seating plans are provided where possible so you can choose where to sit. We also like the embedded tweets that let you find out what people are saying about a show before you part with your hard-earned points.

NEW

Our rating



**PETS**

**Blue Cross**  
[www.bluecross.org.uk](http://www.bluecross.org.uk)

You may find you have something in your eye after visiting this heart-melting site for the animal-rescue charity. The refreshed, mobile-friendly design provides even more space for photos of adorable but unwanted cats, dogs, rabbits, horses and more, and makes it easier than ever to rehome or sponsor a pet online. The 'Pet advice' section has been significantly expanded to provide more guidance about animal care, as well as general health, safety and behaviour tips, including 'Time to say goodbye to your dog' (sniff). There's also a new Veterinary section that checks if your pet is eligible for treatment at a Blue Cross hospital or care centre. It's an excellent site for a good cause that tells you all you need to know about animal welfare and how you can help.

**Our rating**

**DRINK**

**Beer Explorer**  
[explorer.beerforthat.com](http://explorer.beerforthat.com)

Next time you pop into a pub, try something new with the help of this splendid spin-off site from Beer For That ([www.beerforthat.com](http://www.beerforthat.com), reviewed in Issue 358). It lets you explore hundreds of beers by style and flavour, so you can quickly find one to suit your palate. For example, you can show only pale lagers that taste like biscuits and cereal, such as Grolsch; check the alcohol content of pints and bottles; and get similar recommendations. If you don't know your Laughing Frog from your Old Legover, Beer Explorer also provides a guide to beer styles, suggesting unusual flavours such as 'floral' and 'liquorice'.

**Our rating**

## ALSO NEW

### CLAIMS

#### National Accident Helpline [www.national-accident-helpline.co.uk](http://www.national-accident-helpline.co.uk)



The self-proclaimed 'champion of the underdog' has relaunched its website to excellent effect. The simple, smart design lets you quickly find out if you're eligible to make a claim about an accident, how much compensation you're entitled to and how the process works. The friendly, calm tone shows why this 'no win, no fee' company is the most trusted in the UK.

### TRAVEL

#### Scenic [www.scenic.co.uk](http://www.scenic.co.uk)



With videos of boats leisurely sailing down picturesque rivers and interviews with 'journey designers', this site does a great job of promoting Scenic's luxury cruises and tours. You can search for a specific holiday or get suggestions based on whether you want to travel by water, land or a bit of both, although you can't actually book your trip online.

### RADIO

#### Falling Tree [www.fallingtree.co.uk](http://www.fallingtree.co.uk)



The stylish new website for radio production company Falling Tree offers plenty to educate and entertain your ears. As well as recent programmes produced by the Tree for Radio 3 and 4, including *The Fishwives' Tale*, there are collections of music documentaries, audio walks, fascinating podcasts and more. You can also meet the team behind the productions.

### GARDEN

#### The Posh Shed Company [www.theposhshedcompany.co.uk](http://www.theposhshedcompany.co.uk)



Not many of us would be willing to spend several grand on a garden shed, but browsing this relaunched site lets you live the dream. For each shed, you can choose precise dimensions, colour and accessories, download specs and technical drawings, and even get free installation and delivery on larger models. You can't order online, though.



## WEBSITE SECRETS

### Mamma mia!

This year is the 30th birthday of the iconic Italian plumber Super Mario and, to celebrate, Nintendo has added a special surprise to his official site. Jump to [supermario.nintendo.com](http://supermario.nintendo.com) (or take a warp pipe, if you prefer), then right-click the page and choose 'View page source'. Here you'll find a picture of Mario rendered in ASCII art (although, being green, it's technically more like his brother Luigi). There's lots of other great stuff to enjoy on the site, including a complete history of Super Mario and a nostalgic movie. ■

# </> Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

## Top Tips of the Fortnight

### Weebly launches Android tablet app

Tablets are ideal for when you need to make a few changes to your site while you're out and about, or you just don't want to wait for your PC to boot up. The



iPad app for Weebly ([www.weebly.com](http://www.weebly.com)) has been around for a while, but there's now a new Android app, specifically designed for use on tablets of 7in or bigger. You can use the app to create sites from scratch, edit content, re-order pages, edit images and layouts, and view your stats. Download the app

from the Google Play Store at [bit.ly/weebly374](http://bit.ly/weebly374).

### Make social media easier

Maintaining a social-media presence for your website can feel like a full-time job. It's worth checking out the add-ons available from the social networks and the tools you use to create your site to look for options that cut down the amount of time it takes. Check out the apps for Facebook ([bit.ly/fbweb374](http://bit.ly/fbweb374)) and Twitter ([bit.ly/twitweb374](http://bit.ly/twitweb374)); the WordPress add-ons ([bit.ly/wpsm374](http://bit.ly/wpsm374)); and the Wix apps, which are constantly being updated, at [bit.ly/wix374](http://bit.ly/wix374).

### Deal of the Fortnight

PAC Web Hosting ([www.pacwebhosting.co.uk](http://www.pacwebhosting.co.uk)) is celebrating the 'uk' suffix's first anniversary by offering the domain for £1.

## Web-building Helpdesk

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:

Jason West, Technical Director, We Love Servers ([www.weloveservers.net](http://www.weloveservers.net))



**Q** What is the best way to take an RSS feed from a WordPress blog and post it to Facebook? I used to use RSS Graffiti, but it has closed.

Space\_Cowby, Web User forums

**A** Zapier ([www.zapier.com](http://www.zapier.com)) is a great tool that lets different apps and web applications talk to each other.

There are paid-for versions, but you can create up to five free Zaps a month, which can run up to 100 tasks, one of which lets you post from WordPress to Facebook. You can also link up with hundreds of portals including Mailchimp, Evernote, Slack, YouTube and Tumblr, to name but a few. We think it's a great tool for saving man hours and use it to create automated workflows that run daily in the background.



### MINI WORKSHOP | Find out why your website is slow to load

WebPageTest: [www.webpagetest.org](http://www.webpagetest.org) | 10 mins | Any browser

If your website is slow, your visitors will find it frustrating and its ranking could drop. WebPageTest analyses the speed of your site from different locations and browsers, so you can see what's causing the bottleneck



**1** Type the address of the page you want to test into the search box. **1** You can choose the location of the test by clicking the arrow and selecting an option from a long list in the drop-down menu. **2** You can also test your site in different browsers. **3** Click the Start Test button **4** when you've made your selections.



**2** The results page looks complicated but it contains some useful information. You can check how long your page takes to load from the main results at the top **1** and scroll down through the results for individual files, below, to see if there are any obvious bottlenecks. **2** Click the Waterfall image **3** to get a better view of it.



**3** Some time hogs may be add-ons that have to get information from other servers, such as social-media widgets. If these are slowing down your site, consider whether you really need them. If images are the problem, **1** try resizing them or compress them by using image-editing software such as Paint.net ([www.getpaint.net](http://www.getpaint.net)).

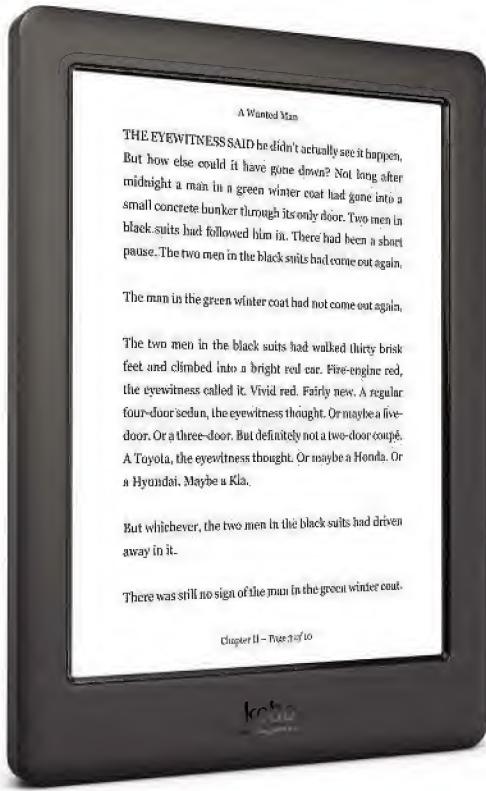


# Product Test

We test and compare the latest products

## Kobo Glo HD

**Seth Barton** tests a new ebook reader with a superb screen that doesn't lock you into Amazon



**A**mazon's Kindle may still be the king of ebook readers but the Kobo Glo HD is challenging its place at the top, with hardware that puts Amazon's similarly priced device to shame.

At £109.99, the Kobo Glo HD is smaller and lighter than the Amazon Paperwhite (which recently dropped in price to £99), but its E Ink screen has almost double the resolution. It's also more than 10 per cent lighter, has twice the storage (enough for around 3,000 ebooks) and far more font options. Technically, that puts it closer to Amazon's top-end Voyage

eReader, which costs £60 more, though the Glo HD's design isn't as classy.

The Kobo's display is excellent and its backlight is even, clear and cooler-looking than the Paperwhite's. The maximum setting is very bright, and can be taken down by gradations until it's virtually off. Text is incredibly sharp, right down to a size we weren't comfortable reading. The screen also has a silky smooth finish, which feels great when you're swiping through pages.

Its range of fonts includes 11 different typefaces, each in 48 sizes, so you can fine tune your text size, line spacing

and margins to get pages looking just how you like them. If ePub books come with their own fonts, the Glo HD can import these, too.

One drawback is that it doesn't have an ambient light sensor to automatically change the brightness of the screen to adjust to your environment. It also doesn't let you switch to a landscape mode, so it's resolutely portrait and book-like, and we couldn't find a way to remove the book title from the top of every page to provide more space for text.

The tiled front page looks good, with recently read titles easy to access, and links to the library and Bookstore have pop-up menus to help narrow down your needs. The store's search tool provides suggestions as you type and we had no trouble finding what we wanted. Kobo quickly offered David Mitchell's *Number9Dream* (at 30p more than Amazon), but it isn't as

### PRODUCT INFO

#### Kobo Glo HD

[www.kobo.com](http://www.kobo.com)

Price: £109.99

### SPECIFICATIONS

- 6in HD Carta E Ink touchscreen
- 1,448 x 1,072 pixels resolution
- 300 pixels per inch
- 180g
- 157 x 115 x 9.2mm
- 4GB of memory
- Supports EPUB, EPUB3, PDF, MOBI, JPEG, GIF, PNG, TIFF, BMP, TXT, HTML, RTF, CBZ and CBR files

### FOR

- ✓ Beautiful screen
- ✓ Superb value for money
- ✓ Compatible with most bookshops

### AGAINST

- ✗ Not compatible with Amazon
- ✗ No ambient light sensor

good as the Kindle at making suggestions for further reading. However, with Kobo supporting the ePub format, which is used by practically every bookstore except Amazon, you can shop around or buy books off smaller publishers directly. This will appeal if you have niche tastes or want to support your favourite authors directly. It also lets you borrow books from local libraries.

### OUR VERDICT



This is a brilliant ebook reader, held back only slightly by its lack of an ambient light sensor. If you're buying your first device or want to defect from Amazon, the Glo HD won't disappoint. It's also a great upgrade for any ePub-compatible reader, even non-Kobo models, because it will work with

FEATURES	★★★★★
PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
EASE OF USE	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★

your existing purchases.

That said, Amazon still offers the broadest range of books from a single store, and at very competitive prices.

# TP-Link AV-1200 Powerline Starter Kit

**Andy Shaw** tests a pair of HomePlugs that deliver high-speed networking at an affordable price

TP-Link's products have a reputation for offering great value for money, but they rarely include trailblazing features. While the company's TL-PA8030P Starter Kit doesn't promise to be any faster than other top-end HomePlugs on the market, these 1,200Mbps units are the first we've seen to come with three Gigabit Ethernet ports. You get two identical devices in this Starter Kit, which means you have enough Ethernet ports to wire six devices.

The devices provide almost everything you could want from a HomePlug. The three Ethernet ports, positioned on the top of the device, make the units ideal for placing by a PC or home entertainment centre, which are often accompanied by a number of other Ethernet devices including routers, NAS drives, smart TVs, games consoles and set-top boxes. The plugs also have the essential pass-through power socket on the front, so you don't end up sacrificing one of your precious wall sockets, which are often already in short supply around TVs and PCs. Because the plugs are oriented with the bulk of the unit pointing upwards, they should avoid your skirting boards, and their gently curved design makes them look a little less brick-like than most others we've seen.

We tested the HomePlugs on a network that spanned our average-sized family home. By connecting one plug to a desktop PC in a ground-



floor corner of the house and the other to a laptop in the opposite corner and up a floor, we simulated the kind of situation where HomePlugs tend to outshine other forms of networking, bringing a fast and reliable connection to a space where Wi-Fi struggles to reach.

We installed NetStress ([nutsaboutnets.com](http://nutsaboutnets.com)) on both computers to test the speed of the data transferring between them. The test was run with TP-Link's kit and, for comparison, with two of Devolo's dLAN 1200+ HomePlugs.

In these tests the TP-Link devices had a transfer speed of 65.97Mbps. The rate was very stable, with few fluctuations or data drop-outs. When we repeated the test with the Devolo products we found them to be slightly

slower, averaging 64.77Mbps, though in practice you're unlikely to notice any difference.

Where TP-Link outshines its competitors is with its pricing. The kit is widely available so it's well worth shopping around, but we found it on

Amazon for £88.99. Devolo doesn't do a three-port Gigabit starter kit so we can't make a direct comparison, but it does have one with single ports. On Amazon, this costs £114.98, which is about 30 per cent more expensive.

## OUR VERDICT



TP-Link's 3-port AV-1200 Starter Kit offers the fastest HomePlugs currently available at a very good price. Between the two plugs you can connect up to six Ethernet devices, which is ample for most home networks. The plugs are well designed and have most of the features we look for in a kit of this type, with pass-through sockets

FEATURES	
PERFORMANCE	
EASE OF USE	
VALUE FOR MONEY	

and upward-pointing Ethernet ports for easy access and skirting-board clearance. The only thing missing is a Wi-Fi extender, but it's a fair compromise for the price.



# Dell Chromebook 11 (2015)

**Jonathan Bray** tests the new version of Dell's 11in Chromebook

There are times when good looks and sleek design have to take second place to practicality; when ruggedness is a priority over good looks. That's what the 2015 edition of the Dell Chromebook 11 is made for. It may not be particularly stylish, but it's unfussy and practical.

The industrial design of the Dell is what sets it apart from other Chromebooks. Dell says its latest budget laptop has passed US Military Standard testing, and while you're not likely to need a computer that can survive under enemy fire, the strong build is well able to



cope with the knocks and bumps that come from everyday use.

Covered in a robust matte-black plastic that does a great job of hiding smudges and scratches, and encircled with rubber bumpers that protect against drops, the Dell Chromebook 11 is a tough black chunk of a laptop.

What the new Chromebook 11 sacrifices in aesthetics, however, it more than makes up for in ease of use and practicality. Its lid can be swung back a full 180 degrees, and has reinforced hinges that can withstand any damage caused by rough handling. Add in the optional touchscreen and you've got a very user-friendly machine for browsing the web.

The keyboard is excellent, equipped with springy, responsive keys and a layout that makes sense. It's a shame that the touchpad isn't as good. It's fine for simple use, but the integrated buttons make it annoying when you're cutting, pasting, dragging and dropping between multiple windows.

As for ports, there's HDMI 1.4 out, one USB 3 and one USB 2, plus you get a slot for an SD card and a 3.5mm headphone jack. There's also a 720p webcam, dual-band

802.11ac Wi-Fi and Bluetooth 4, which comprehensively covers all your needs for wireless connectivity.

## Screen and performance

The screen is the Chromebook's weak point. The 1,366 x 768 TN (Twisted Nematic) panel is disappointingly dull, with poor vertical viewing angles. It also has a low maximum brightness of 239cd/m<sup>2</sup> and a low contrast ratio of 306:1.

Performance is, happily, a little better. Under the hood there's a Bay Trail-M processor - a 2.6GHz dual-core Intel Celeron N2840 - backed by 4GB of memory and 16GB of storage. However, it didn't do as well as its

predecessor in our benchmark tests, completing the SunSpider JavaScript test in 526ms and scoring 1,453 in the Peacekeeper browser test.

This isn't a huge problem, though, because Chrome OS and the fairly light browser-based tasks that run on it don't need much raw power, and the Chromebook feels responsive and smooth during day-to-day use. The laptop starts up in a matter of seconds, and even with 15 tabs open, we experienced very little slowdown.

It performed well in our battery test, lasting more than seven and a half hours playing a constant video loop at a screen brightness of 120cd/m<sup>2</sup>.

## PRODUCT INFO

### Dell Chromebook 11 (2015)

[www.dell.co.uk](http://www.dell.co.uk)

Price: £200 for 2GB (non-touchscreen); £227 for 4GB (non-touchscreen); £275 for 4GB with touchscreen

## SPECIFICATIONS

- 2.6GHz dual-core Intel Celeron N2840 Bay Trail-M processor
- 2 or 4GB of memory
- 11.6in screen (touchscreen optional)
- 802.11ac Wi-Fi
- Bluetooth 4.0

## FOR

- ✓ Rugged design
- ✓ Good value for money

## AGAINST

- ✗ Disappointing screen
- ✗ Average performance

## OUR VERDICT



The Dell Chromebook 11 has its weaknesses, but it's an excellent device if you're after a practical laptop that's easy to carry about and rugged enough to handle a bit of rough and tumble. The price remains affordable, costing from £200 to £275 depending on the amount of memory and the inclusion of a touchscreen. If you want

### FEATURES



### PERFORMANCE



### EASE OF USE



### VALUE FOR MONEY



more style, you could check out the Toshiba Chromebook 2 or the HP Chromebook 11, but neither one is as hardy and practical as Dell's rubber-encased model.



# Web User's Best Buys

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## HARDWARE

### NETWORK CAMERA

#### Y-cam HomeMonitor HD

£150 from [www.homemonitor.me](http://www.homemonitor.me)

Date tested: June 2015



The Y-cam HomeMonitor HD will save you money in the long run if you want to save captured motion-detected footage online. Its unique online storage option supports a wide range of devices.

#### KEY SPECS

Apps for Android, iOS, Windows Phone, Roku ■ 1/4in CMOS sensor ■ Viewing angle: horizontal 80°, vertical 45°, diagonal 87° ■ 1,280 x 720 pixels resolution ■ 15fps frame rate ■ Ethernet and 802.11n Wi-Fi ■ 85 x 85 x 30mm ■ 1150g

### BUDGET LAPTOP

#### HP Stream 11

£179.99 from [store.hp.com/ukstore](http://store.hp.com/ukstore)

Date tested: April 2015



The HP Stream 11 offers excellent performance and a respectable battery life. It's a sleek, attractive laptop, available in blue or magenta, with a good screen that offers wide viewing angles.

#### KEY SPECS

Dual-core 2.16GHz Intel Celeron N2840 processor ■ 2GB of memory ■ 11.6in non-touchscreen ■ 32GB flash drive ■ 1,366 x 768 pixels resolution ■ Single-band 802.11n Wi-Fi ■ 300 x 206 x 20mm ■ 1.29kg ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

### SSD

#### Samsung 850 Pro 256GB

£136.03 from [www.kikatek.com](http://www.kikatek.com)

Date tested: February 2015



The Samsung 850 Pro is crammed with new technology that makes it faster and more durable than its competitors. You could buy a similarly sized SSD for much less, but in our tests the cheaper models weren't as fast and they don't come with the 850 Pro's generous 10-year warranty.

#### KEY SPECS

256GB (also available in 128GB, 512GB & 1TB) ■ 53p per GB ■ SATA III interface ■ 2.5in drive case ■ 10-year warranty ■ 100 x 70 x 7mm ■ 66g

### BUDGET PC

#### Chillblast Fusion Cyborg

£600 with monitor, £500 without from [www.chillblast.com](http://www.chillblast.com)

Date tested: May 2015



The Chillblast Fusion Cyborg is compact, quiet and capable of excellent performance. There isn't much room in the case for future expansion, but it's a great value PC.

#### KEY SPECS

Quad-core 3.2GHz Intel Core i5-4460 ■ 8GB of memory ■ 1TB hard drive ■ 21.5in monitor ■ 1,920 x 1,080 pixels resolution ■ 3 x USB 3 ports, 5 x USB 2 ports ■ Windows 7 or 8.1 ■ 427 x 364 x 189 mm ■ Three years return-to-base warranty

### MULTIROOM SPEAKER

#### Sonos Play:1

£167 from [www.currys.co.uk](http://www.currys.co.uk)

Date tested: March 2015



The Sonos Play:1 offers impressive audio quality and comes with excellent software and great apps that provide seamless integration with music services. It's the ideal speaker to use as a starting point for a home entertainment system.

#### KEY SPECS

Two speakers ■ 802.11n Wi-Fi, 1 x 10/100 Ethernet ■ Android and iOS apps ■ Compatible with UPnP and SMB servers ■ AAC, FLAC, MP3, OGG and WAV ■ 161 x 12 x 12mm ■ 1.8kg

### TABLET

#### Google Nexus 9

£319 from [play.google.com](http://play.google.com)

Date tested: February 2015



The Nexus 9 is our favourite Android tablet. It has a fantastic screen, even better than the iPad Air 2's, and superb battery life, lasting over 15 hours in our tests. It's cheaper than the latest iPad and comes in 16GB and 32GB capacities.

#### KEY SPECS

8.9in screen ■ 2,048 x 1,536 pixels resolution ■ Dual-core 2.3GHz 64-bit Nvidia Tegra K1 Denver processor ■ 16/32GB storage ■ 4G option costs £60 extra (32GB models only) ■ Android 5.0 ■ 228 x 154 x 8mm ■ 425g



## SOFTWARE & SERVICES

### BACKUP AND SYNC

#### SyncBackFree

**Free** from [bit.ly/syncback366](http://bit.ly/syncback366)

**Date tested:** March 2015

SyncBackFree is very capable software that gives you plenty of control over how it can be used. If you know what you need from your backups and you're prepared to spend some time configuring the options, SyncBackFree has everything you need.



#### KEY FEATURES

- Synchronise: Copy files in both directions
- Restore back-up files easily
- Email logs
- Schedule backups
- Simple and Advanced mode
- Runs on Windows 8, 7, Vista, and XP
- Extensive Help documentation and support

### VIDEO EDITING

#### Adobe Premiere Elements 13

**£81.08** from [www.adobe.com/uk](http://www.adobe.com/uk)

**Date tested:** December 2014

Premiere Elements 13's superb interface makes its many features neat but accessible. You won't find better video-editing software for the price.



#### KEY FEATURES

- Automatic editing
- Export to multiple video formats
- Burn to DVD and Blu-ray
- Image stabiliser
- Stop-motion capture
- Motion tracking
- Musical scores and sound effects
- Upload to YouTube and Vimeo

### ONLINE STORAGE

#### Google Drive

**From free** from [drive.google.com](http://drive.google.com)

**Date tested:** August 2014

Google Drive is easy to use and has lots of free storage. The Windows software integrates with Explorer, so saving and syncing files is like keeping them in any other PC folder.



#### KEY FEATURES

- 15GB free storage
- Web-based office software
- Works with Windows XP, Vista, 7 and 8+
- Chrome browser add-on
- Android and iOS apps
- 100GB extra storage for £1.19 per month; 1TB for £5.97 per month; 10TB for £59.51 per month

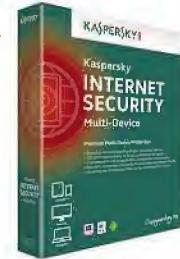
### INTERNET SECURITY

#### Kaspersky Internet Security 2015

**£17.99** from [bit.ly/kaspoffer](http://bit.ly/kaspoffer)

**Date tested:** January 2015

Kaspersky Internet Security performed near-perfectly throughout our tests last year, with only one unwanted program slipping through. Our sister title *Computeractive* is selling it at the reader-offer price of £17.99 (full price £39.99). Click the link above.



#### KEY FEATURES

- Anti-virus and firewall tools
- Protects online shopping and banking
- Identity and privacy tools
- Dangerous-website alerts
- Advanced parental control
- Licences for one, three and five PCs; for one or two years, or pay monthly
- Multi-Device version for Mac and Android protection

### PHOTO EDITING

#### Adobe Photoshop Elements 13

**£81.08** from

[www.adobe.com/uk](http://www.adobe.com/uk)

**Date tested:** December 2014

With its tidy interface and pop-out trays, Adobe Photoshop Elements provides everything an amateur photographer needs and helps you quickly find the right editing tools.



#### KEY FEATURES

- Compatible with Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8+ (32- and 64-bit)
- Bundled photo organiser
- Content-aware edits
- Guided edits
- People-beautifier tools
- RAW support

### ONLINE SITE BUILDER

#### Weebly

**From free** from [www.weebly.com](http://www.weebly.com)

**Date tested:** May 2014

Weebly's drag-and-drop interface makes it extremely easy to use. Its templates are a little restrictive, but there are still plenty of options to choose from and the results look great. It also has free Android and iOS apps.



#### KEY FEATURES

- 115 templates
- Unlimited storage
- SEO tools
- Meta tags
- Password protection
- E-commerce tools
- Ad-free Starter edition
- Android and iOS apps
- RSS
- Site stats



# Best Free Software

## PRIVACY TOOL

### Privacy Eraser Free 4

[bit.ly/privacy374](http://bit.ly/privacy374)

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8+

**File size:** 4.4MB

If you're worried about snoopers spying on your PC activities, you can use this excellent all-in-one tool to remove all trace of what you've been doing and shred any personal or incriminating data stored on your computer. Privacy Eraser Free clears all manner of sensitive info from your system including your browsing history, typed URLs, auto-complete and auto-fill history, saved passwords, searches, recent documents, temporary files and more.

The software is very easy to use, with a large Scan button in the centre of its interface. Click this and the program will quickly scan your system to present you with a list of items that can be removed. Three smaller buttons to the right let you run a Quick Clean, Clean & Restart and Clean & Shut down, depending on how much of a hurry you're in to erase your private data. Similar to CCleaner, the sidebar on the left lets you choose what to clean in Windows, browsers and



installed applications, while providing access to other useful tools that can get rid of unwanted elements, including a startup manager and app uninstaller. You can manage your Internet Explorer settings and add-ons in the Misc section. Privacy Eraser can automatically clean your PC at Windows startup or on a schedule that suits you, and lets you add its cleaning options to your right-click menu.

The latest version of the software

introduces a Registry cleaner, which you access through the Windows section. It also includes enhanced browser-profile management, improved history cleaning, better system and browser monitoring and a whole bunch of other tweaks and fixes.

However, it should be noted that some advanced features, such as the ability to choose a more secure file-shredding method, are only available in the paid-for Professional edition.



### MINI WORKSHOP | Wipe all traces of your PC activities using Privacy Eraser

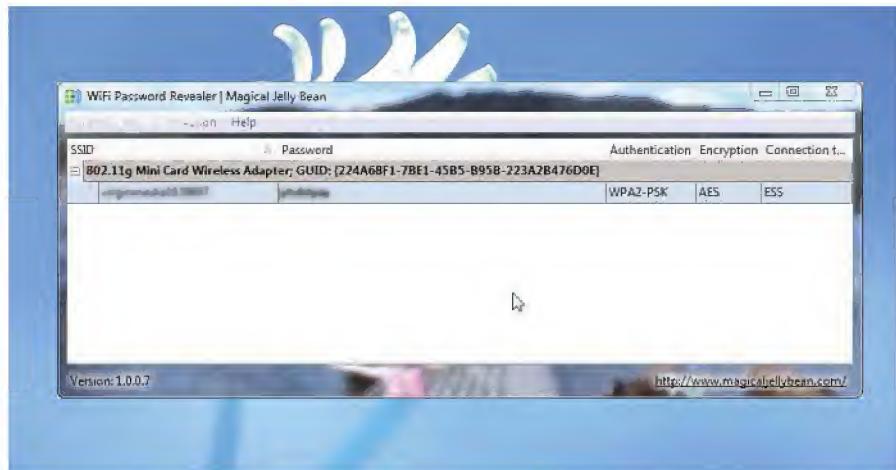


**1** You can start a privacy clean in Privacy Eraser Free either by clicking the Scan button or by choosing any of the other quick-clean options on the right. You can monitor the program's progress **1** and pause or stop a running scan at any time. **2** The results of the scan are displayed below. **3**

**2** When the scan has finished, you'll be able to choose the type of clean to perform. **1** You can clean specific items via the right-click context menu. **2** The sidebar on the left lets you clean up after Windows, browsers and applications **3** and also access features such as the File Shredder **4** and Drive Wiper. **5**

**3** You can choose which areas of your system to clean under Windows. **1** Just tick the options to include. You can bring up the right-click context menu to target one section at a time. **2** The new Registry cleaner is accessed here. **3** The software will warn you if you select potentially risky areas to clean.

This fortnight's top new software downloads to help you make the most of your PC, and they're all FREE



#### PASSWORD FINDER

#### WiFi Password Revealer

[bit.ly/wifipass374](http://bit.ly/wifipass374)

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8+ **File size:** 2.5MB

If you can't remember the Wi-Fi password for a particular wireless network, this simple tool can help. Run it in Administrator mode and the program will display the SSID (Service Set Identifier), password and security type for all the wireless networks saved on your system (it can't guess or crack the password on new networks). You can export the details as an Excel spreadsheet or simply copy a particular password or the contents of any cell.



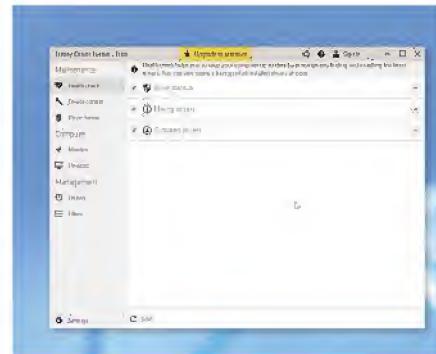
#### GAME

#### Generative City

[bit.ly/gencity374](http://bit.ly/gencity374)

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8+ **File size:** 21.8MB

The aim of this game is to explore the monochrome city and find the red cube located somewhere within it. You leap from building to building and scale walls and rooftops in the manner of a free runner. The city is procedurally generated, which means that every creation is different from the last. You can occasionally get stuck on buildings, but pressing 'n' generates a new map so you can start afresh.



#### DRIVER UPDATER

#### Driver Fusion 3

[treexy.com](http://treexy.com)

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8+ **File size:** 5.3MB

Windows uses drivers to control all the hardware inside, or connected to, your PC. This program lets you manage your installed drivers, and can find missing and outdated ones and install the latest versions. It can also back up and restore the icon positions and resolutions of each screen. Version 3 includes several changes to the interface. It's been redesigned to make navigation easier, and there's a new Help button.

#### New Windows 8 Apps

##### SoundCloud Shadow

[bit.ly/scshadow374](http://bit.ly/scshadow374)

**Min requirements:** Windows 8+

**File size:** 8.9MB

This app lets you search for and listen to music on SoundCloud, and save your favourite tracks to enjoy offline. It's currently a little light on features, but works well.



##### Wish

[bit.ly/wish374](http://bit.ly/wish374)

**Min requirements:** Windows 8+

**File size:** 3.05MB

Shop using the Wish app to save money on items such as clothing, accessories and electronics. Create an account and then choose the sort of things you're looking for. You can buy items or save them for later.



##### Bomb Chain

[bit.ly/bombchain374](http://bit.ly/bombchain374)

**Min requirements:** Windows 8+

**File size:** 2.59MB

The aim of this game (which for some reason can't decide if it's called Bomb Chain or Jelly Bomb) is to clear your screen by clicking the correct jelly to set off a chain reaction.



# Best Free Software

## GADGET MANAGER

### 8GadgetPack 14

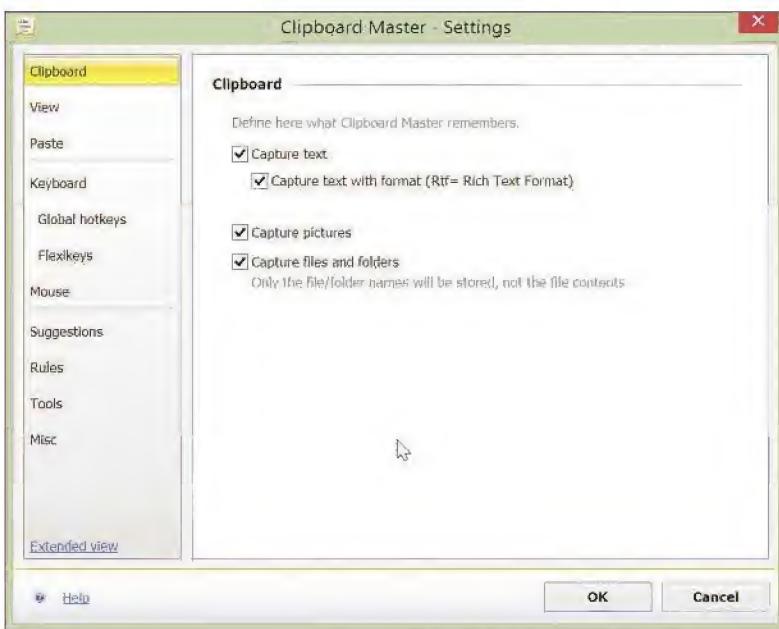
[8gadgetpack.net](http://8gadgetpack.net)

**Min requirements:** Windows 8+/10

**File size:** 20.3MB

Windows 7 (and Vista) let you display floating 'gadgets' (widgets) on your Desktop, but Microsoft removed this feature from Windows 8 in favour of apps. 8GadgetPack restores the option and provides you with a selection of gadgets to display, including a sidebar to keep your gadgets in, CPU monitor, app launcher, clock, calendars, weather widget, feed reader, mini radio and a Shutdown/Restart button. There's also a handy built-in window manager you can use to switch between open windows.

Version 14 adds the option to resize your gadgets, which is handy for high-res screens where the default gadget size can look a bit small. Windows 10 support has been improved, and there's a new weather gadget, too.



## CLIPBOARD MANAGER

### Clipboard Master 4

[www.clipboardmaster.com](http://www.clipboardmaster.com)

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8+

**File size:** 11MB

Clipboard Master is a powerful alternative to the Windows clipboard. As well as being able to store multiple copied objects across several clipboards, it provides previews of stored images and lets you add your most frequently used items to collections so they can be quickly pasted. The program also includes a password safe for storing your login details securely and a handy screenshot tool for grabbing what's on your Desktop.

The latest update to Clipboard Master introduces a wealth of changes and boosts performance. You can now print pictures and screenshots, and the 'New clipboard' option starts a wizard to simplify the creation process. In Firefox, pressing F2 will now capture the entire page.



## WINDOWS THEME PACK

### Windows 10 Transformation Pack 4.0

[www.windowsxlive.net](http://www.windowsxlive.net)

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8+

**File size:** 106MB

Windows 10 is set to arrive at the end of July, but if you want to get a taste of how the new operating system will look and work before then (and you don't want to run the Insider Preview), install this brilliant Windows 10 Transformation Pack. It works with all versions of Windows, from XP onwards, and makes major changes to the system to replicate the appearance and features of the new OS. However, unlike the Insider Preview, installing it won't overwrite your current operating system and it can easily be uninstalled. This latest update to the transformation pack lets you experience all the most recent changes to the preview version of Windows 10, and also fixes various problems.

 Don't install...

...Install this instead 

## UtilStudio Photo Resizer

[bit.ly/util374](http://bit.ly/util374)

**Min requirements:**  
Windows XP/Vista/8+

**File size:** 4.2MB

Resizing photos should be easy, but this clunky program makes it unnecessarily difficult. The Settings panel takes up a massive amount of space and pointlessly spreads its options across eight screens rather than presenting them all on one page. It's also not very flexible when resizing images, although it is reasonably fast.



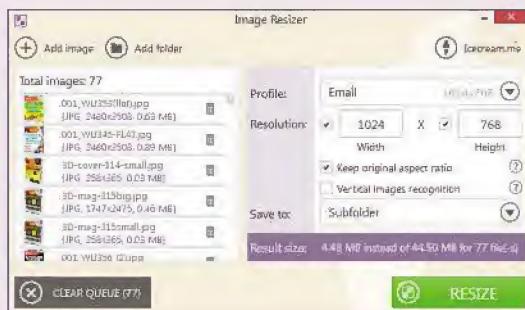
## IceCream Image Resizer

[bit.ly/resizer374](http://bit.ly/resizer374)

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/8+

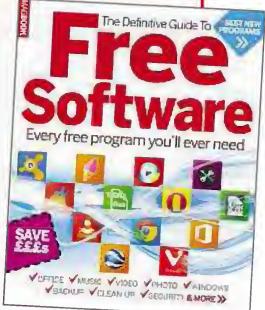
**File size:** 15.2MB

The brilliant IceCream Image Resizer offers a quick and easy way to shrink large photos from your camera or phone, so you can share them with friends. The interface lets you browse for photos to resize, or you can drag and drop an image on the program window. You can choose a pre-set resizing profile from options including email, Desktop, Facebook timeline cover and iPhone wallpaper, and adjust the resolution and aspect ratio. We particularly like that as soon as you specify your settings, the program tells you the size of the new file.



## GET THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO FREE SOFTWARE

Our new Free Software MagBook is packed with 148 pages of brilliant workshops, tips and advice about every program you'll ever need.



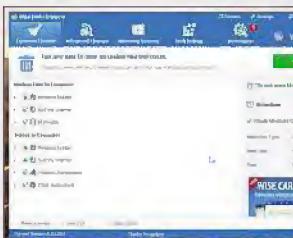
### Discover how to:

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## UPDATED | New tweaks and fixes for your favourite free programs



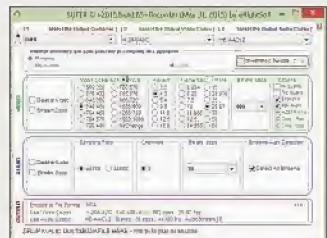
### SYSTEM CLEANER

#### Wise Disk Cleaner Free 8.61

[www.wisecleaner.com](http://www.wisecleaner.com)

**Min requirements:**  
Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10  
**File size:** 2.65MB

Wise Disk Cleaner deletes junk files, cleans up after PC and internet use and removes unwanted Windows features. Its disk defrag is also faster than Windows'. This update adds Windows 10 support and improves cleaning up after third-party software.



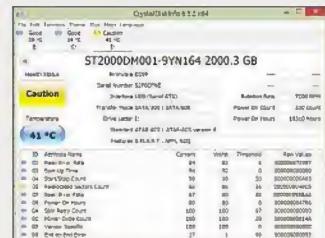
### MEDIA CONVERTER

#### SUPER 2015.65

[www.erightsoft.com](http://www.erightsoft.com)

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8+  
**File size:** 66MB

SUPER (Simplified Universal Player Encoder and Renderer) can convert any audio or video file from one format to another. The new build adds support for playing and encoding into HEVC/H.265 UHD 4K mode, and improves performance when encoding in MP4 and FLV formats.



### HARD-DRIVE CHECKER

#### CrystalDiskInfo 6.5.2

[crystalmark.info](http://crystalmark.info)

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8+  
**File size:** 4.1MB

This program monitors the health of your hard drive and displays its SMART (Self-Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Technology) status, current temperature and details, such as the number of hours the drive has been active for. The new version adds an Auto Refresh interval and new themes.



### WALLPAPER MANAGER

#### John's Background Switcher 4.10

[bit.ly/jbs374](http://bit.ly/jbs374)

**Min requirements:**  
Windows XP/Vista/7/8+ or Mac OS X **File size:** 2.2MB

JBS can pull images from your hard drive or from various websites including Flickr, Facebook and Instagram. The new release adds support for 500px RSS feeds, and removes the option of using photos from Facebook friends and Google Images. ■

**GET FREE SOFTWARE FIRST** subscribe to Web User at [subscribe.webuser.co.uk](http://subscribe.webuser.co.uk)



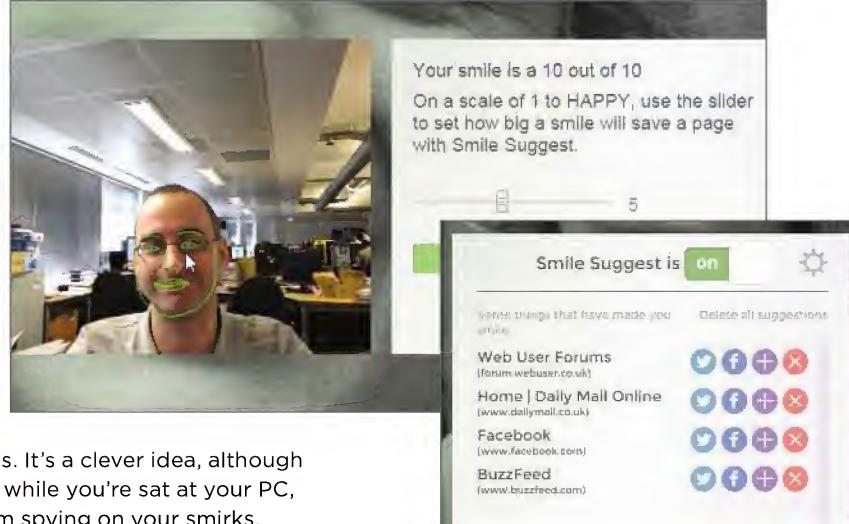
# Best New Browser Tools



## CHROME

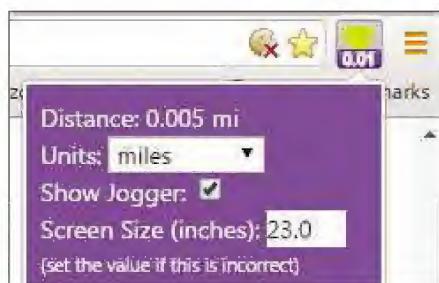
### Save web pages by smiling at them

One of our workshops in Issue 371 ([bit.ly/webuser371](http://bit.ly/webuser371)) looked at a program called eViacam, which lets you control your PC with head movements. Smile Suggest ([bit.ly/smile374](http://bit.ly/smile374)) takes this idea a step further by letting you save web pages you like by smiling into your webcam. Install the extension, grant it access to your camera and click the Settings icon so it can capture and rate your smile (ours was a '10', of course). Once this is done, Smile Suggest will monitor your face and save any pages that prompt a grin as you browse the web. Click its toolbar button to view the list and bookmark, share or delete individual entries. It's a clever idea, although it's likely that your face is usually immobile while you're sat at your PC, and you might not be keen on your webcam spying on your smirks.



### Track your scrolling distance with a jogger

Have you ever wondered what distance you cover every day by scrolling up and down web pages? Now you can find out using a fun Chrome extension called Scroll-o-Meter ([bit.ly/scroll374](http://bit.ly/scroll374)). This tracks how far you've scrolled in miles or kilometres, based on the size of your screen, and awards you achievements for reaching set goals. Not only that, but the add-on also places a tiny jogger at the bottom of your browser, who runs from one side to the other as you scroll and pauses when you stop. You can hide this little man if you find him distracting – we managed to get him all the way across our screen on the marathon Mail Online homepage alone!



### Buy Amazon books for less from local shops

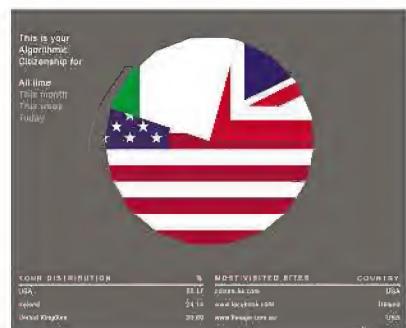
It's no secret that many independent bookshops have closed because of competition from Amazon, but the online behemoth isn't always the cheapest option. Bookindy ([bit.ly/bookindy374](http://bit.ly/bookindy374)) offers the best of both



worlds by telling you when a book you're viewing on Amazon is available for a lower price from a local bookseller. It uses data from the independent-bookshop network Hive ([www.hive.co.uk](http://www.hive.co.uk)) to tell you how far away the store is, or you can order the book from that seller online for delivery or collection. Sadly, most of the books we searched for were slightly cheaper on Amazon, but Bookindy is still worth a look if you want to support local businesses rather than tax-dodging global corporations.

### Discover where your web allegiances lie

When you go online, it's easy to forget that many of the websites you visit are located on the other side of the world. Citizen Ex ([bit.ly/citizen374](http://bit.ly/citizen374)) is an interesting new Chrome extension that determines your 'algorithmic citizenship' based on where you go online and where from. For example, if you mostly visit US sites, Citizen Ex will assume you have strong American 'allegiances' even though your IP address shows you're in the UK. This data is presented as a pie chart of national flags, a global map and a breakdown of your citizenship today, this week and since you installed the add-on. Citizen Ex is interesting if not particularly accurate, locating several UK sites in Ireland!



This fortnight's most useful tips and add-ons to help you get the most from Chrome, Firefox, Opera and more



## FF FIREFOX

### View works of art on your New Tab page

Back in Issue 368, we raved about the brilliant Chrome extension Google Art Project ([bit.ly/googleart368](http://bit.ly/googleart368)), which transforms your New Tab page into a canvas for classic paintings. Art-loving Firefox users will be delighted to hear that there's now an unofficial Art Project for Firefox add-on ([bit.ly/artproject374](http://bit.ly/artproject374)), which similarly brings masterpieces from galleries and museums around the world to your browser. Unlike the Chrome version, the painting changes every day rather than every time you open a new tab, but you can still click the image description to learn more about the artwork, including its real-world location. Click the cog icon in the top-right corner to restore the standard New Tab page.



### Use Facebook Messenger in Firefox

The new, online version of Facebook Messenger ([www.messenger.com](http://www.messenger.com)) means you can talk directly to friends without needing to visit Facebook itself, although you'll still need to open the Messenger website. A new Firefox add-on called Facebook Messenger Panel ([bit.ly/facebook374](http://bit.ly/facebook374)) makes things easier by displaying Messenger in a panel within your browser, which you can open by clicking its toolbar button. This panel can be resized, moved around and 'pinned' to prevent it from closing. You can also set up keyboard shortcuts to show and hide it.



### Type uppercase letters more easily

One of the trickiest things about typing with one hand is that you often need to stretch your fingers to reach the Shift or Caps Lock key when you want to type a capital letter. You can get around this problem by installing To



**+** Tell us your favourite add-ons at [www.facebook.com/webusermagazine](http://www.facebook.com/webusermagazine)

## OTHER BROWSERS



### Run add-ons in Opera's sidebar

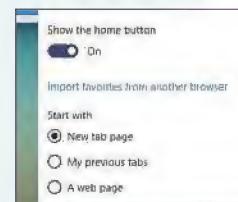
Although add-ons are great way to enhance your browser, they often take you away from the page you're viewing. The latest version of Opera addresses this problem by adding support for sidebar extensions. These open on the left-hand side of the browser rather than in a new tab, so you can carry on browsing the current page. There are currently around 30 of these tools in the new Sidebar section of Opera's Add-ons site ([bit.ly/sidebar374](http://bit.ly/sidebar374)) including sidebar versions of Google Keep and Tweet Deck; a calculator and notepad; and bookmarks and extensions managers.



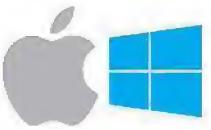
### Import your bookmarks into Edge

The latest version of Edge ([bit.ly/edge374](http://bit.ly/edge374)), Microsoft's new Windows 10 browser, adds the useful options to import your bookmarked sites from other browsers, including Chrome, Firefox and Internet Explorer.

Simply open the Settings panel, click the 'Import favorites from another browser' link and choose which browser(s) to import from. Another new feature in Edge adds an optional Home button, so you can return to your homepage with a single click. This can be a web page, blank or your most recently visited tabs.



# Best Free Apps



## App of the Fortnight

### MAPS

#### Navmii GPS World

[bit.ly/navmii374](http://bit.ly/navmii374)

**Min requirements:** Android (varies with device), iOS 7, Windows Phone 8.1

**Size:** Varies with device

Previously known as Navfree, Navmii GPS World is not the first mapping app to win our 'App of the Fortnight' accolade this year, but it's one of the best we've seen. The app aims to replace your sat-nav by offering free voice-guided GPS navigation and automatic re-routing. It can be used offline, which is great if you want to avoid data or roaming charges on your mobile bill.

To coincide with its name change, Navmii has been given a major update that includes a new interface, updated maps, live traffic information and millions of additional points of interest. There's also a handy new feature that lets the app's 20 million users share

valuable information with the rest of the community by reporting roadworks, safety cameras and hazards. Like any conventional sat-nav, Navmii lets you navigate using a postcode, city, street or point of interest, and you can download maps for multiple countries. Because it's free, the app is powered by adverts, which can be removed for £1.49. You can also receive speed camera alerts if you pay a further £1.99.



Our rating

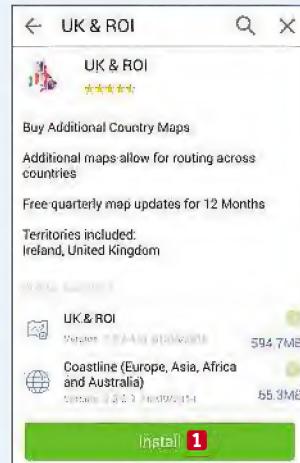
UPDATED



### MINI WORKSHOP

#### Navigate to any address in the UK using Navmii

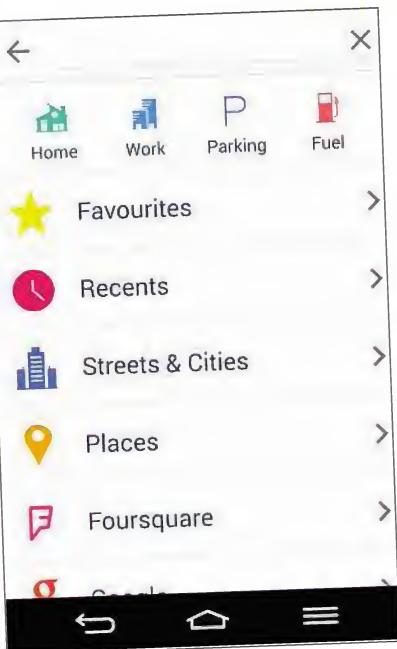
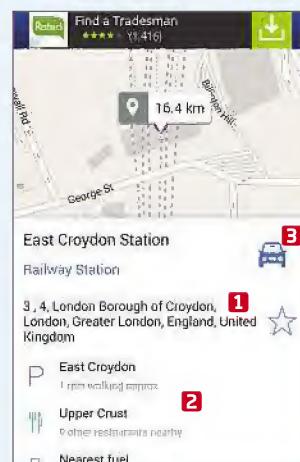
- 1 Run Navmii and tap 'Download Maps'. Select 'Free maps', and tap Install **1** to download maps and points of interest for the UK and Republic of Ireland. The maps will take some time to download, but make sure you leave the app open or your download might be halted.



- 2 Once it's installed, make sure you've switched on Location on your device and reopen Navmii. The app shows your location on a map **1** along with information including the speed limit. **2** To change the speed units, tap the three-line menu icon, **3** scroll down to Preferences and tap 'Distance units'.



- 3 To navigate, tap the 'Place or address' box and enter your destination. Results from your downloaded maps are shown below. Tap the address and select it again on the next screen to save it as a favourite **1** or view nearby amenities. **2** To plan your route, select the blue car icon. **3**



Our rating



This fortnight's top free and paid-for apps for Android, iOS and Windows phones and tablets, and smart TVs

## SOCIAL

### Popcorn Buzz

[bit.ly/popcorn374](http://bit.ly/popcorn374)

#### Min requirements:

Android 4.0

Size: 6.4MB

Popcorn Buzz may sound like a social site for discussing movies but it's actually an app that lets you make free calls to groups of up to 200 people. A spin-off from Japanese messaging app Line, it's currently only available on Android, but the developers are reportedly working on an iOS version. We can't imagine many people wanting to make such crowded conference calls, but a service that hosts free group calls on a smaller scale could easily catch on. As with WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, Popcorn Buzz connects your calls via a data connection, so we'd recommend using Wi-Fi where possible.



#### Our rating



## PRODUCTIVITY

### Flipd

[bit.ly/flipd374](http://bit.ly/flipd374)

#### Min requirements:

Android 4.0

Size: 4.6MB

If you find that you're constantly distracted by your smartphone, then this is the app for you. Flipd aims to help you manage your phone addiction by locking you out of your device for a pre-determined amount of time. Indeed, after you've tapped 'Flip Off', there are only a few basic options available to you from the lock screen including silencing your phone, activating auto-response texts and making emergency calls (there's also a handy 60-second unlock feature, which can be used for urgent matters). Otherwise, Flipd keeps your device completely locked and unusable until its timer runs out. While the concept sounds a little extreme, we think it's a great way of ensuring you can't be distracted by your phone at times when you need to focus. If you're a parent, you can also use the app to remotely lock your children out of their phones!



#### Our rating



## SERVICES

### Pickle

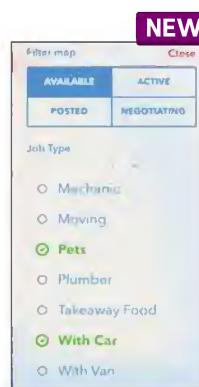
[bit.ly/pickle374](http://bit.ly/pickle374)

#### Min requirements:

Android 4.0, iOS 7.1

Size: 9.1MB

Pickle aims to aid you with all kinds of tasks and problems by connecting you with its community of tradesmen, craftsmen, designers and others who are prepared to help. According to its developers, you can use the app to post jobs as trivial as picking up a tub of ice cream or as important as jump-starting your car. Unlike many of its competitors, Pickle has no set pricing structure, so you can offer a price for your job before watching fixers bid to take it on. Like many service-based start-ups, this one is so far only available in London, but we hope to see it expand to other parts of the UK soon.



#### Our rating



## ROUND UP | Quick bites

### SnapChat

[bit.ly/snapchat374](http://bit.ly/snapchat374)

#### Min requirements:

Android 4.0, iOS 7.0

Size: 17MB



Perhaps to avoid more security-related controversy, the latest version of Snapchat has been updated to require SMS verification when you log in on a new device. Unfortunately, the new feature is not enabled by default, which is a bit of an oversight.



### Headsoff

[bit.ly/headsoff374](http://bit.ly/headsoff374)

#### Min requirements:

Android 5.0

Size: 569k



If you're running Android Lollipop, you'll have noticed that its notifications are a little different to previous versions of the mobile operating system. HeadsOff lets you disable annoying heads-up notifications or switch them off for specific apps.



### SMS Integration for iChat

[bit.ly/smschat374](http://bit.ly/smschat374)

#### Min requirements:

Android 4.1

Size: 14MB



This handy app lets you send and receive messages from your Mac using your Android phone number. However, you're limited to five messages a day unless you buy a pro subscription costing \$12.99 (£8.25) a year.





# Best Free Apps

## REFERENCE

### HowStuffWorks

[bit.ly/howstuffworks374](http://bit.ly/howstuffworks374)

**Min requirements:** Android (varies with device), iOS 8

**Size:** Varies with device

The HowStuffWorks ([howstuffworks.com](http://howstuffworks.com)) website explains thousands of topics in simple terms, and its mobile apps now offer a range of fascinating articles, podcasts, videos and quizzes every day. All new content can be found on the app's Latest Stuff home screen, but you can also browse by category and opt to receive notifications about popular newly published items. The app's developers claim that every podcast published on the website is available through the app along with accompanying videos. We loved the content, but the app crashed every time we started a quiz, so we hope this problem is ironed out quickly.



UPDATED



Our rating



5

## NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

## TRAVEL

### Make My Day

[bit.ly/lonelyplanet374](http://bit.ly/lonelyplanet374)

**Min requirements:** Android 4.0.3, iOS 8

**Size:** 11MB

**Price:** Free (with in-app purchases)

New from Lonely Planet, Make My Day ensures you have a memorable day out in six of the world's greatest cities. The app lets you browse selected experiences for free, but unlocking everything costs 78p per city (or £2.38 for all six).



## CHILDREN

### Loopimal

[bit.ly/loopimal374](http://bit.ly/loopimal374)

**Min requirements:** iOS 5.1.1

**Size:** 51.3MB **Price:** £2.49

Loopimal is a colourful new app that lets you create musical animation sequences with different animals. It has loads of melodies, movements and rhythms to choose from.



## SPORT

### Eurosport Player

[bit.ly/eurosport374](http://bit.ly/eurosport374)

**Min requirements:** iOS 7

**Size:** 36.8MB **Price:** Free (with in-app purchases)



Make My Day



Loopimal



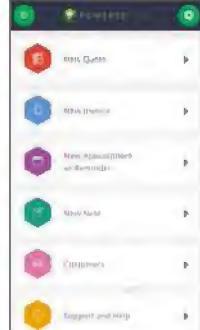
Eurosport Player



Lumy



Powered Now



## PHOTOGRAPHY

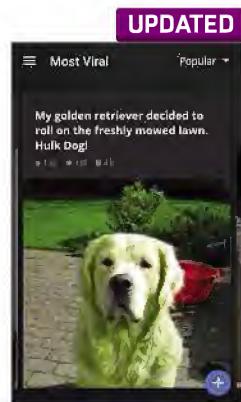
### Imgur

[bit.ly/imgur374](http://bit.ly/imgur374)

**Min requirements:** Android 4.1, iOS 7

**Size:** 6.2MB

Earlier this year, Imgur overhauled its iOS app and now the Android version has had a makeover, too, letting you explore, share and discuss the most popular images on the web. When you first launch the app, it loads a feed of Most Viral images, which you can flick through by swiping your finger across the screen. If you like a post, you can 'upvote' it (so it appears higher up the list), save it to your favourites or add a comment to the discussion below. Although we enjoyed browsing the wide range of images on Imgur, we suspect that the never-ending stream of pictures could end up becoming yet another distraction from work!



Our rating



Eurosport Player gives you access to Eurosport and Eurosport 2, letting you stream tennis, cycling, snooker and motorsport from your smartphone or tablet. The app is free to download but you'll need to buy a subscription costing £4.49 (iOS) or £4.99 (Android) a month.

## PHOTOGRAPHY

### Lumy

[bit.ly/lumyapp374](http://bit.ly/lumyapp374)

**Min requirements:** iOS 8

**Size:** 5.1MB **Price:** £1.99

Take beautiful photos every day with the aid of this app, which notifies you of the ever-changing 'magic hour' around sunrise and sunset when you get the best natural light for photographs.



## BUSINESS

### Powered Now

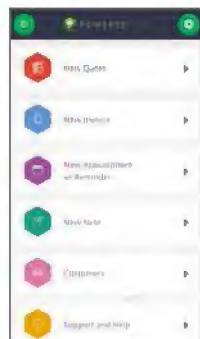
[bit.ly/powerdnow374](http://bit.ly/powerdnow374)

**Min requirements:** iOS 6

**Size:** 28.7MB

**Price:** Free (with in-app purchases)

This brilliant app makes it easier for you to manage your business by helping you quickly produce quotes and invoices, manage your appointments, and back everything up to the cloud. A one-user subscription costs £4.99 a month.





## Best New TV Apps

### FILM & TV

#### Netflix

[bit.ly/netflix374](http://bit.ly/netflix374)

**Min requirements:** Varies with device

**Size:** Varies with device

While the Netflix website has been significantly redesigned (see review on page 16), the only major change to the Android app is the addition of support for Google Smart Lock. This new password-management feature lets you sign into apps and websites using passwords that you've saved with Google, preventing those annoying moments when you accidentally sign out of a service and can't remember how to sign back in. You don't need to do anything because Smart Lock should just sign you into Netflix automatically. However, if you'd rather not share your passwords with Google, you can opt out through Google Settings, Smart Lock Passwords.



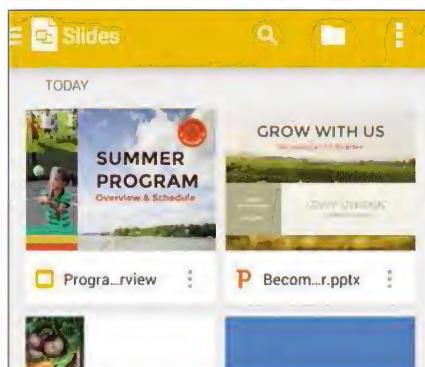
### OFFICE

#### Google Slides

[bit.ly/slides374](http://bit.ly/slides374)

**Min requirements:** Android 4, iOS 7

**Size:** 116MB



Google's Slides app is a great free way to create and edit presentations on the go, but it's previously been hampered by the fact that displaying your work on your phone or tablet screen is far from ideal. This has been remedied in the new update to the Android and iOS app, which adds support for Chromecast and AirPlay, so you can stream presentations from your mobile device to your TV. Slides is compatible with Microsoft PowerPoint files, which means you can also enjoy (or endure, depending on their content) presentations sent to you by other people. You can also share projects and collaborate on them with others at the same time.

### FILM & TV

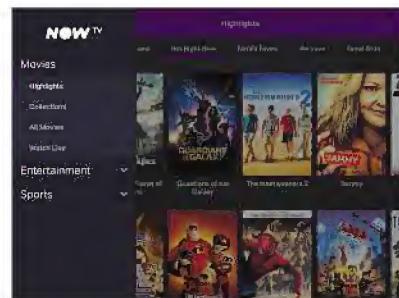
#### Now TV

[bit.ly/nowtv374](http://bit.ly/nowtv374)

**Min requirements:** Android 4, iOS 6

**Size:** 12MB

We've become big fans of Now TV since our three-month free trial to the service (available to Chromecast users) took us through the whole fifth season of *Game of Thrones*, and the Android app has now been redesigned to make it even better. The biggest improvement is that tablet users can now browse films, TV shows and sporting events in landscape mode as well as portrait, while the spruced-up layout lets you swipe through live and catch-up content with ease. The search bar has been enlarged so you can quickly find something to watch, and the whole app feels smoother and faster. Now TV costs from £6.99 per month for an Entertainment Pass.



## X Don't install...

### Decibel Meter

[bit.ly/decibel374](http://bit.ly/decibel374)

This app promises to measure the level of environmental noise around you. However, it's very basic and the interface is so dark that all you can really see is the number of decibels in the centre of the screen. Unlike similar apps, including the far superior Sound Meter (see right), it doesn't clearly explain what the figures mean, other than stating "very quiet" or "increased noise" in its Help section, which your ears can work out for themselves.



## ...Install this instead

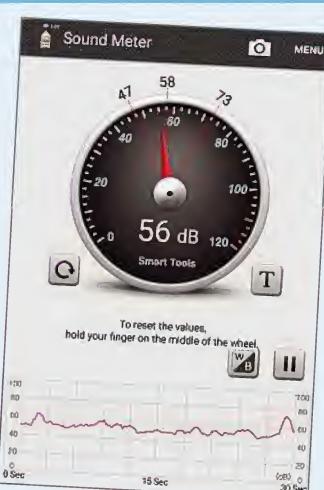
### Sound Meter

[bit.ly/sound374](http://bit.ly/sound374)

**Min requirements:** Android 2.2

**Size:** 2.8MB

Are you living or working in unbearably noisy conditions? Perhaps they're digging up the road outside your office or you can hear your neighbour's TV blasting out *EastEnders* every evening? This simple but very accurate sound-measurement tool uses the built-in microphone on your mobile device to measure in decibels the volume of noise in your immediate vicinity. You can calibrate the app using your voice - this is normally around 40-60 dB (decibels) - and use its list of comparisons, from 20dB ("rustling leaves"), through 80db ("busy street") to 120dB ("threshold of pain"), to discover if you're being subjected to unacceptable auditory conditions.



# Our guide to Apple Music

Apple has launched its long-awaited music-streaming service, and announced improvements to iOS and Mac OS X. **David Crookes** takes a closer look at what's new

## What's Apple done now?

Apple held its annual Worldwide Developers Conference (WWDC) which, if you've never seen one, typically involves its CEO Tim Cook taking to the stage in front of an excited audience to gush about the company's new products and services. This year's conference was particularly noteworthy for confirming some long-standing rumours, chief among them the launch of a new music-streaming service called Apple Music.

## What's so special about this one?

According to Mr Cook, Apple Music "will change the way you experience music forever", although the way it works – allowing you to stream an unlimited number of songs for a monthly subscription fee – is similar to many services that have been around for a while, most notably Spotify ([www.spotify.com/uk](http://www.spotify.com/uk)). Not that Spotify's CEO Daniel Ek appears overly concerned about the competition. Following Apple's announcement, he tweeted simply, "Oh ok", although he did delete this soon afterwards.

## What are the key Apple Music features?

Most importantly, there are lots of songs: around 30 million, which is roughly the same number as Spotify. These can be listened to online and off, and you can also add your own tracks to your library. Songs you've ripped from CDs and purchased from the iTunes store are added automatically. There are also



tens of thousands of music videos, all without adverts, and recommendations based on your tastes. New artists and albums are being added every week and there are curated playlists, too.

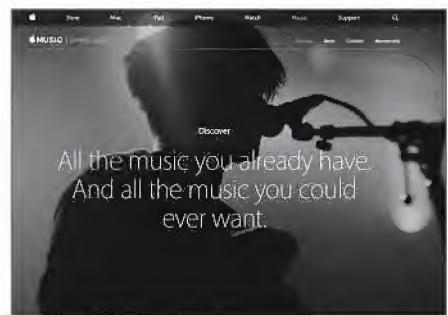
## Why has Apple become involved in music streaming?

Most likely because it seems to be the way the music industry is heading. In May this year, Warner Music reported that revenue from streaming music had overtaken profits from digital downloads for the first time. Up until now, Apple's iTunes has been all about purchasing downloads and there was a risk that it could be left behind by rival services. So last May, it bought Beats Electronics from hip-hop artist Dr Dre for \$3bn, which included the company's recently launched music-streaming service.

## Can I listen to every song on iTunes?

No. The company has said that users can stream from the Apple Music library, not the iTunes music library, and there will be

some notable exceptions including The Beatles. There are more than 37 million songs on iTunes, so around seven million won't be streamable.



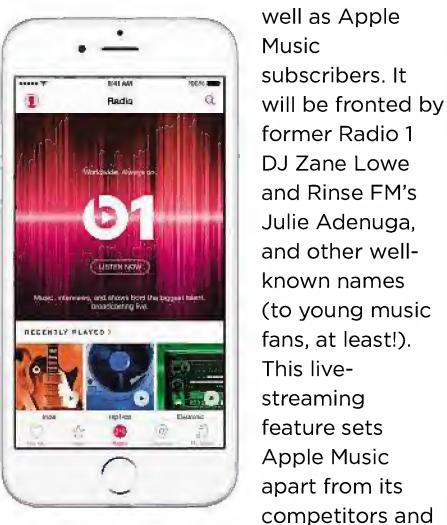
## Why not just stick with Spotify?

Well, exactly. Both services have a monthly fee of £9.99 in the UK, and Spotify benefits from nine years' experience in this market. Spotify is also popular – it revealed in early June that it has 20 million paying subscribers and it is in healthy form, looking to rise against Apple Music by hunting for exclusives and seeking to match Apple Music's family plan, which lets up to six people

share an account. Spotify has also upped its free trial period to 60 days. But that's still short of the three months being offered by Apple Music, and Spotify is beaten hands down by Apple's accompanying Beats 1 and Connect services.

## What is this Beats 1 thing?

Beats 1 is a global radio station broadcast from New York, Los Angeles and London that will also be available to anyone signed in with an Apple ID, as



well as Apple Music subscribers. It will be fronted by former Radio 1 DJ Zane Lowe and Rinse FM's Julie Adenuga, and other well-known names (to young music fans, at least!). This live-streaming feature sets Apple Music apart from its competitors and

gives traditional radio stations a run for their money, too. Lowe is very well connected and the station provides extra kudos to Apple – badly needed following the furore last year when U2's new album found its way to 500 million users, whether they wanted it or not.

## How does Connect work?

Connect is the social part of Apple Music, which allows musicians to communicate with fans in a variety of ways including photos, lyrics and videos. They can also post songs. Users can leave comments on the artists' own profile pages and get responses. Unsigned artists can also upload songs and interact.

## When is Apple Music out?

Now. It was launched on 30 June for the iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch, Mac and Windows PC, although Android users will need to wait until autumn to use it. It can be synced to an Apple Watch and will also be compatible with Apple TV. Anyone with a Beats Music subscription can move it over to Apple Music.

## Does it have a free option?

Yes, but this only offers Beats 1 and Connect. If you're using Apple Music on Android, when it finally launches that version, you won't get anything for free. That's unlikely to lure users from Spotify but we're still confident that Apple knows what it's doing.

## WHAT ELSE IS NEW FROM APPLE?



### What else was announced at the WWDC?

Well, Apple offered teasers for some features of iOS 9 and it also showed off a second version of the Apple Watch OS. The next version of OS X for the Mac will be called El Capitan, Apple revealed, after the iconic rock in Yosemite National Park.

### What is coming soon for iOS?

Apple is promising lots of under-the-hood features for iOS 9 that will make using the iPhone and iPad a more pleasurable experience, which includes improving the battery life. One of the most notable new features is App Thinning, which frees up storage space by only downloading essential data to your device.

### Will there be improvements to iOS apps?

There will indeed. Passbook is being renamed Wallet and Notes will become more advanced, even allowing for drawings. HealthKit is going to track more data and the error rate will be reduced for virtual assistant Siri.

### Are there any new iOS apps coming?

Yes, a News app is set to replace Newsstand. This will aggregate stories from the most popular websites and newspapers and present them in a magazine-style format.

Users in the UK will, finally, be able to take advantage of Apple Pay,

thanks to deals with a host of banks including HSBC and Santander,



and retailers such as Marks & Spencer and Costa; and will be able to travel on London Transport. And if you've ever wanted to see a split-screen multitasking iPad, then you're in luck because this feature is heading to the iPad Air 2.

### How about OS X El Capitan – what's that about?

There's no major redesign this time around but Mac OS will follow the example of split-screening in iOS by allowing two apps to snap next to each other neatly on your Desktop. The Desktop will also feel much cleaner thanks to a new Mission Control feature that quickly resizes the windows so they fit on your screen without overlapping.

Some of the apps have been refreshed, too: Safari lets you mute all tabs at once, you can use swiping gestures in Mail and there are improvements to Notes and Maps.



### Will OS X be better for games?

Yes. Not only will El Capitan speed up your Mac to make it 1.4 times faster than the current OS X, Yosemite, it also introduces the Metal API, which enhances the graphics capability of OS X, making games and apps run more fluidly. El Capitan will be free to download when it's released this autumn.



# Beat Google's Restrictions

COVER  
FEATURE

**Wayne Williams** explains how to remove constraints from Google's software, websites, apps and hardware, so you can tweak them to suit your needs



**G**oogle has always supported freedom on the web, and has spoken out against those who try to curb those freedoms, but many of its own products and services aren't as open and unrestricted as they seem (or as we would like them to be). There are good reasons for some of the limits it imposes – Google is a business, after all – but there are ways to get around the restrictions if you know how. In this feature, we reveal the best new ways to

hack your favourite Google tools to make them work exactly how you want them to.

Over the following six pages, we'll show you how to speed up Android, play music directly from Google Drive, save maps to your phone for offline viewing, watch geographically restricted videos on YouTube, install 'incompatible' Android apps, expand your Chromecast's capabilities and much more.

## SEARCH

### Remove Google redirects from shared links

Many people don't realise that Google uses a redirection link to track the pages you click in its search results, which allows it to see where you're going online and the type of content you're interested in. If you feel this is an invasion of your privacy, and you would prefer that the search giant not track your browsing habits in this way, you can install a browser add-on to remove



this redirection, without affecting the way you use Google to find and visit web pages. For Chrome users, there's Remove Google Redirection ([bit.ly/gredirect374](http://bit.ly/gredirect374)), and if you use Firefox, there's Google Redirects Fixer ([bit.ly/redirectfix374](http://bit.ly/redirectfix374)). Both will take you straight to your intended destination without Google registering that you've clicked that link.

### Restore the previews that Google removed

Google used to display thumbnail image previews alongside its search results to help you avoid visiting irrelevant sites. We thought this was a handy feature, but sadly it's one that Google no longer offers. Fortunately, you can get it back by installing SearchPreview for Chrome ([bit.ly/searchpreview374](http://bit.ly/searchpreview374)) or Firefox ([bit.ly/searchfirefox374](http://bit.ly/searchfirefox374)). Run a search as



normal and the site thumbnails will now appear next to the results. Annoyingly, the latest version of SearchPreview also inserts ads into search results, but you can easily disable this by going into the add-on's Options and deselecting 'Insert related links'.

## DRIVE & DOCS

### Move Drive images to Google Photos

The new Google Photos service ([photos.google.com](http://photos.google.com)) lets you store an unlimited number of images online for free, provided they're no larger than 16MB in size. In contrast, Google Drive still has a limited storage allowance and any photos you keep in your account will eat into your remaining space. You can get around this by moving all your images from Drive to Photos. In Google Drive, click the Google Photos option in the left-hand menu and choose 'Add folder

to My Drive', then go into any other folder that contains images. Select multiple photos by holding down Shift as you click, then right-click and select Move To. Choose Google Photos in the list of folders, and click 'Move'.

Turn to page 52 for our guide to using Google Photos.

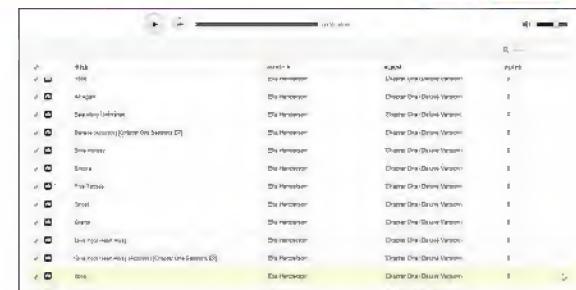
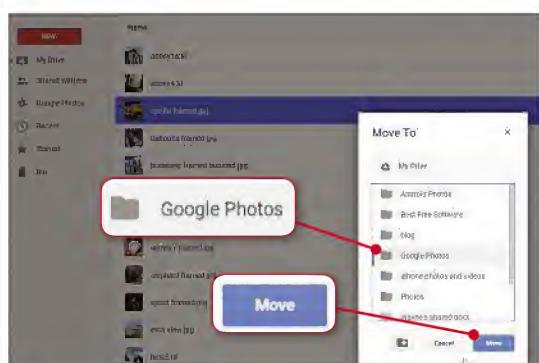
### Play music directly from Google Drive

Google lets you store songs in Drive, and play some of them directly from your account, but only if they're in one of the supported formats, such as MP3. DriveTunes ([bit.ly/drivetunes374](http://bit.ly/drivetunes374)) is an excellent app for Chrome that turns Drive into a music jukebox with flexible controls and the useful ability to queue up and shuffle tracks so you don't need to keep playing them manually.

Additionally, there's a new app called CloudPlayer from DoubleTwist ([bit.ly/cloudplayer374](http://bit.ly/cloudplayer374) – not to be confused with Amazon's CloudPlayer!) that can stream music directly from Google Drive (and other cloud-storage services) to your Android phone or tablet.

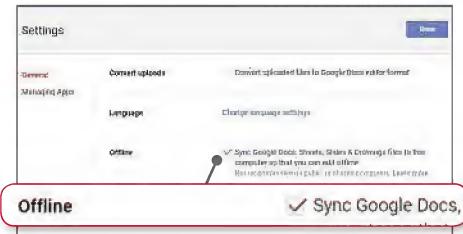
### Access Google Drive files offline

You usually need an internet connection to use Google Drive, but if you want to access your files without one, there is a simple solution. If you're using Chrome, log into Drive ([drive.google.com](http://drive.google.com)), click Settings and tick the box next to Offline. Unticking the box later will disable the



feature. As soon as you reconnect to the web, any edits you've made to the files will be synced with the online versions.

See our Mini Workshop below to find out how to open Drive files in any Desktop program.



## YOUTUBE

### Stop YouTube playing clips automatically

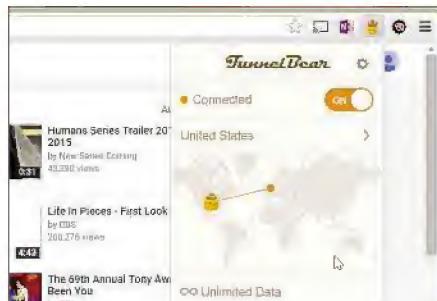
A recent 'improvement' to YouTube means that when it finishes playing the video you're watching, it picks another from the 'suggested' list and starts playing that. We think this is a really annoying feature and at first glance it doesn't seem as if there's any obvious way of preventing it from happening. Luckily, there is. To turn off the Autoplay feature, click the blue tick box above the



'Up Next' panel. It will turn into a grey slider that lets you disable Autoplay.

### Watch geographically restricted videos

Some YouTube videos, most notably music and TV ones, won't play in the UK because of geographical restrictions. The reason is usually because the content owner doesn't have the rights to show it outside a certain territory. To get around this, use the new TunnelBear add on for Chrome ([bit.ly/tunnelbear374](http://bit.ly/tunnelbear374)),



trending. Click as many fonts as you want to add them to your selection.



which we wrote about in last issue's Best New Browser Tools ([bit.ly/webuser373](http://bit.ly/webuser373)). When you encounter a problem video, just enable TunnelBear and reload the clip. You can only get 250MB of free data per month (there's a 500MB bonus for verifying your email address), but this should be plenty for streaming the occasional restricted video.

### Set YouTube videos to repeat

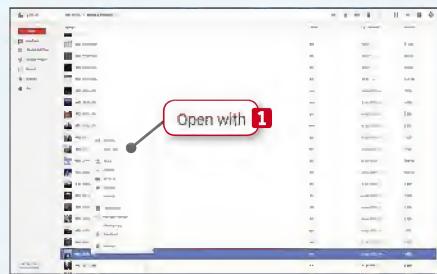
While YouTube is happy to play video after video from its 'suggested' selection, it doesn't seem possible to show the same one (your new favourite music video, for example, or a funny clip you can't get enough of) over and over on a loop. You can get around this restriction by using a tool called YouTubeRepeater.com. Just add 'repeater' after 'youtube' in the URL. To listen to Blur's 'Ong Ong' repeatedly, for example, the address would be [www.youtuberepeater.com/](http://www.youtuberepeater.com/)



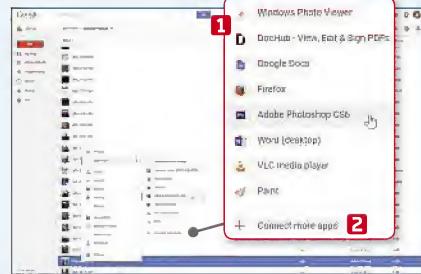
### MINI WORKSHOP | Open Google Drive files on the Desktop



**1** Want to open a file stored in Google Drive using a desktop program? You could download the file, work on it and then re-upload it again, but there's an easier solution. First install Google Drive for PC or Mac ([bit.ly/drive374](http://bit.ly/drive374)). This will sync the content on Drive with a folder on your computer. **1**



**2** You could launch your Desktop application to open the file you want from the local Google Drive folder, but we're going to do it all from our browser. Install Application Launcher for Drive ([bit.ly/applauncher374](http://bit.ly/applauncher374)) in Chrome, and open Drive on the web. Right-click the file you want to make changes to, and go to 'Open with'. **1**



**3** You'll see a list of applications you can use to open that file. **1** You can add additional web apps if you wish. **2** Select a desktop program and grant Google Drive permission to open it. The program will launch and open your file, ready for editing. Save the file as normal when you're done.



watch?v=A0qA38h9w3o. There's also an option to open the looped video in a mini player that's separate from your browser, so you can keep watching it while you get on with other things.

## Set playback quality to a different default

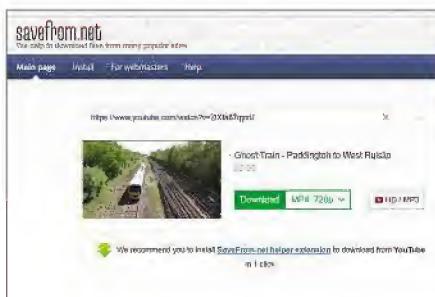
YouTube automatically sets the default quality of videos based on factors such as the size of the video window, the quality of the original upload, and the speed of your internet connection. You change the quality of videos through the player's settings, but if you want greater



control, install the Chrome add-on Your Quality for YouTube ([bit.ly/yourquality374](http://bit.ly/yourquality374)), click the button and choose a new default.

## Download videos

YouTube is a streaming-only service, which means the only videos it allows you to download are those you've uploaded yourself. You can get around this using an add-on such as Video Downloader Professional for Chrome ([bit.ly/vdownloadpro374](http://bit.ly/vdownloadpro374)) and Firefox ([bit.ly/vdownloaderff374](http://bit.ly/vdownloaderff374)); a program such as the excellent Icecream Media Converter ([icecreamapps.com](http://icecreamapps.com)); or a website like SaveFrom.net ([en.savefrom.net](http://en.savefrom.net)).



## Skip boring video intros

A Reddit user called Wadsworth once noted that the first 30 per cent of every YouTube video is unnecessary and can be skipped, saving you viewing time. The so-called Wadsworth Constant turns out to be surprisingly true. Google used to let you add &wadsworth=1 to the end of any YouTube URL to skip the first 30 per cent but that no longer works. Instead, simply pause the video and hit '3' on your keyboard to jump forward by that amount.



.org). We'll be providing a complete guide to rooting in our Weekend Project section next issue.

Be warned that although rooting your phone is safe – provided you follow the instructions carefully – it will void your warranty so you should think carefully before you root.

## Install Android apps 'incompatible' with your device

Android developers, and Google, can decide which devices apps can be installed on. The reasons an app is considered incompatible with your phone may include it having the "wrong" version of the Android OS and regional restrictions. If you root your phone, you can use Market Helper ([bit.ly/markethelper374](http://bit.ly/markethelper374)) to install incompatible

## HACK GOOGLE HARDWARE

### Watch local videos

Chromecast doesn't let you stream videos stored on your PC, smartphone or tablet to your TV, but you can get around this restriction by using Plex ([plex.tv](http://plex.tv)) or Vodostream ([bit.ly/vidstream374](http://bit.ly/vidstream374)), which both offer extensions for Chrome, and apps for Android and iOS.



### Improve Chromecast playback

If you've noticed some juddering when streaming videos from your PC to your TV via the Chromecast, open your Chrome browser and click the Cast button. From the menu that appears, select 'Tab projection quality', which can be found under Options, and switch from High or Extreme to Standard. This reduces video quality, but should make playback smoother.

### Run Chrome apps offline

Chrome OS is designed to be used when you're online, but there are plenty of apps you can use without an active connection. Just browse the selection of offline-enabled apps at [bit.ly/offlineapps374](http://bit.ly/offlineapps374).



### Run Android apps on Chrome OS

Some Android apps can already run on Chrome OS, and more are coming. To run any Android app on the browser-based operating system, install ARC Welder ([bit.ly/arcwelder374](http://bit.ly/arcwelder374)) on Chrome OS, and then get the APK file for the app you want. These can be tricky to find, but try [www.androidapksfree.com](http://www.androidapksfree.com) or [downloader-apk.com](http://downloader-apk.com), or use APK Downloader ([bit.ly/apkdownload374](http://bit.ly/apkdownload374)) to download the files from Google Play.



## ANDROID & PLAY

### Customise your device by rooting it

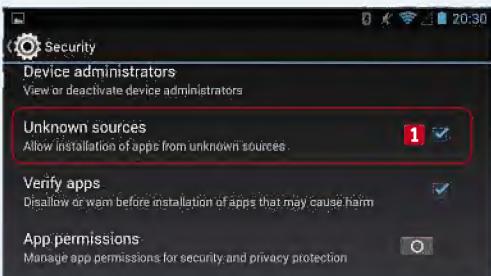
Rooting your Android phone allows you to install a custom ROM, which replaces the stock Android firmware. This gives you access to extra features and options, lets you overclock it, and more. One of the most popular ROMs is CyanogenMod ([www.cyanogenmod.org](http://www.cyanogenmod.org)).





## MINI WORKSHOP

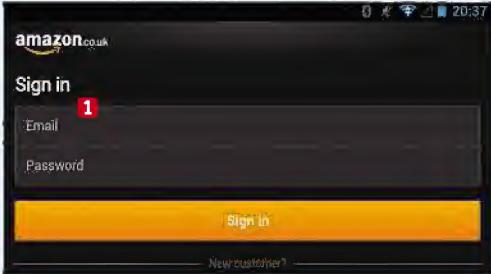
### Use the Amazon Appstore on any Android phone



**1** The Amazon Appstore regularly hosts giveaways that let you get Android apps cheaply or for free, but it's only available on Amazon devices because Google has banned it from the Play Store. To get around this, open Settings on your Android phone and look under Applications or Security for the Unknown Sources option **1** and tick it.

**2** Doing this will allow you to sideload apps not available in Google Play, including the Amazon Appstore app. Go to [www.amazon.co.uk/getandroidapp](http://www.amazon.co.uk/getandroidapp) on your Android phone or tablet. Tap the button to download the app **1** (in APK format). Tap OK.

**2** When it's downloaded, open your notifications and tap Install, then Open.



**3** You now have the Amazon Appstore app on your phone or tablet. To use it, and to explore and download all the available apps, you'll need to sign in with your Amazon account details. **1** If you're interested in a particular app, compare prices on the Appstore and Google Play and download it from the cheaper of the two.



apps. Alternatively, you can also use APK Downloader ([bit.ly/apkdownload374](http://bit.ly/apkdownload374)) to download APK files from Google Play to sideload on your device. You need to enter your username and password to use this tool; read the FAQ on the site to see why, and steer clear if you're not comfortable providing this information.

There's also an APK Downloader for the Amazon Appstore. See our Mini Workshop on the left to find out how to use Amazon Appstore on any Android device.

### Make your phone faster than Google allows

Google doesn't deliberately hobble the speed of your phone but you can make it feel much faster using hidden developer options. Go to Settings, tap 'About phone' and then tap 'Build number' seven times. Go to the main Settings menu and look for 'Developer options' near the bottom somewhere. Change the 'Windows animation scale', 'Transition animation scale' and 'Animator animation scale' from 1x to 5x, to give your device a boost.



### Pretend you're somewhere else

Android doesn't let you fake your location but you can still do it by going through the Developer



options (see the tip above for how to access these). Tap 'Allow mock locations' to enable the feature and then install a third-party fake GPS app from Google Play. There are several to choose from.

See our 'Stop your phone spying on you' feature on page 46 for more on this topic.

### Hack your device using secret codes

Although Google clearly doesn't want everyone to know this, Android devices have quite a few secret codes that you can use to do everything from making the power button turn off your phone without displaying the menu, to backing up all your photos and videos. Here are a selection, which you enter using your phone's keypad. Note that not all codes are guaranteed to work with all phones, and Samsung and HTC devices have their own codes.

#### \*#06#

Displays your phone's IMEI (International Mobile Station Equipment Identity) number

\*#\*#273283\*255\*663282\*#\*#\*

Backs up all your photos and videos to the destination of your choice

\*#\*#7594#\*#\*

Makes the Power button turn off your device without displaying the menu

\*#\*#4636#\*#\*

Displays information about your phone, including battery usage and Wi-Fi

\*#\*#7780#\*#\*

Performs a factory reset, so be careful!

\*2767\*3855#

Wipes the phone completely, so be even more careful!

\*#\*#1472365#\*#\*

Tests your GPS

**GMAIL****Bypass Gmail's 25MB attachment limit**

Want to send a large file to someone (or just yourself) by attaching it to a Gmail message? If it's over 25MB in size you're out of luck because that's the maximum Google will allow. However, you can easily get around this by using Google



Drive as an intermediate step – upload the file to Google Drive, compose your email in Gmail then click the 'Insert files using Drive' button next to the attachments icon.

If you use Dropbox rather than Drive, you can beat the attachment restriction by installing the new Chrome extension

**Dropbox for Gmail** ([bit.ly/chromedropbox374](http://bit.ly/chromedropbox374)). This also adds an icon to Gmail's Compose window, so you can send files of any size from your Dropbox account, even if the recipient doesn't use the storage service.

**Access your messages offline**

If you're stuck without an internet connection, you won't be able to read

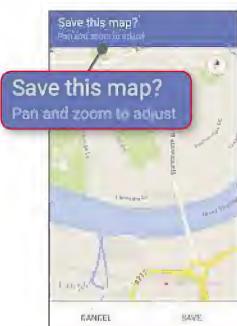


or respond to all of your messages in Gmail, although you

do get some limited offline functionality in the mobile web version and iOS app. Chrome users can also install the Gmail Offline add-on ([bit.ly/gmailoffline374](http://bit.ly/gmailoffline374)), which lets you use the service when not connected to the internet.

**MAPS****Save maps to your phone to view offline**

Rather than loading an area of a map using your phone's cellular connection, which takes time and eats into your mobile data allowance, you can 'cache' the map while you're connected to a Wi-Fi connection, and then access it again when you're offline. Browse to the



area of the map you want to save, and type ok\_maps into the search box. Pan and zoom around to make sure the area you want is covered, and then click the Save button. This trick works on both iPhones and Android devices.

**Add new features to Google Maps**

Although Google Maps is a brilliant free tool, it lacks some options that would make it even more useful. The Chrome extension Tools for Google Maps on Chrome ([bit.ly/maptools374](http://bit.ly/maptools374)) fixes this by adding a host of features, including a tool for measuring distances, pop-up latitude-longitude coordinates, a screen-capture option, location info from Wikipedia and much more.

**NEXT ISSUE**

on sale Wednesday 15 July 2015

# REMOVE, REPAIR & RECOVER

Your definitive guide to the three Rs that fix any PC problem

**PLUS...****ROOT YOUR ANDROID**

The pros and cons of hacking your phone or tablet

**ONLINE PHOTO STORAGE**

Which service should you use to share your snaps?

**REBOOT YOUR PC FASTER**

Speed up the time it takes to shut down and restart

SUBSCRIBE TO WEB USER AT  
[SUBSCRIBE.WEBUSER.CO.UK](http://SUBSCRIBE.WEBUSER.CO.UK)

**CHROME****Install Chrome extensions from any source**

Google no longer allows you to install extensions from outside its own web store. However, if you're prepared to take responsibility for what you install, you can get around this restriction and install extensions from anywhere. First, make sure you have the latest version of the browser installed, then download the third-party extension you want in CRX (Chrome extension) format. Click the Settings button and select More Tools, Extensions, then tick the 'Developer mode' option. Drag and drop the CRX file onto the Extensions page and confirm installation.

Developer mode

**Use Chrome extensions in Opera (and vice versa)**

Chrome and Opera share the same browser engine, which means you can install Chrome extensions in Opera, and Opera extensions in Chrome. To install Chrome extensions from Google's Web Store in Opera, you'll need to grab the Download Chrome Extension ([bit.ly/downchromeex374](http://bit.ly/downchromeex374)). To install Opera extensions in Chrome, find the extension you want, right-click 'Add to Opera' and choose 'Save link as...'. Change the extension of the saved file from '.nex' to '.crx' (some will already be in CRX format). In Chrome, type chrome://extensions in the address bar and press Enter. Drag and drop the renamed extension onto your Chrome browser window and click Add to install the add-on. ■

# STOP YOUR PHONE SPYING ON YOU

Why should your mobile apps know everything you do and everywhere you go? **Rob Beattie** explains how to turn off default options that leak your personal info

**A**ndroid and iOS apps have never been more useful. They can tell you how long it will take you to get home, find you a good place to eat, watch where you go online to make helpful recommendations, integrate with other apps to make sharing photos easier – heck, a lost device can even tell you where it is and let you lock it remotely. But this convenience comes at a price. To take advantage of these fancy features, you have to lay open your life to app developers and service providers, and that's not always a good thing.

In this feature, we turn the spotlight on the snoops and show you how to stop your devices spying on you. We'll kick off with the easiest ways to limit what companies can find out about you when you use your phone or tablet, then take a look at some advanced privacy controls.

## Stop apps knowing where you are

One of the simplest ways to stop anyone spying on you is to turn off all the location-services features on your device. These use GPS satellites, along with your mobile network and wireless connection, to 'triangulate' your exact geographical position, so turning them off completely removes you from companies' radars. Of course, it also means that convenient features such as step-by-step directions and accurate weather forecasts will stop working as well, so



this anonymity comes at a price.

Both Android and iOS devices let you turn off location services (sometimes called 'location tracking') at a stroke. On an iPhone or iPad, simply go to Settings, Privacy, Location Services and switch the slider to Off. On Android, go to Settings, Personal, Location and switch the option to Off.

Alternatively, you can change the location settings for each individual app:



the Settings menu of each individual app. Depending on the app, you'll usually be able to turn the option on or off, or select 'While Using'.

Apple stores these in Settings, Privacy while Android users can usually find them in

## Stop apps storing where you've been

Something else to bear in mind is that both Android and iOS devices keep a location history of places you've visited. For complete privacy, you

should disable this as well. On iOS, go to Settings, Privacy, Location Services and then scroll all the way down to System Services. Tap Frequent Locations to see a list of the places you visit most often. Tap one to display a map with



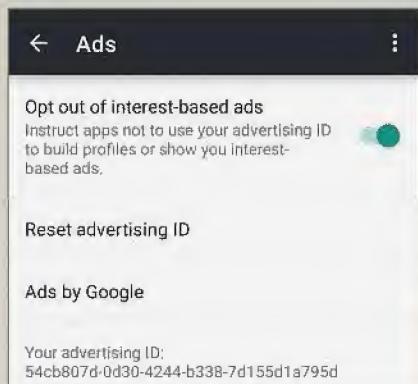


the locations marked on it. Tap Clear History to remove them.

On Android, choose Settings, Location, then Location History. At the bottom of the screen, tap Delete Location History.

## Stop apps targeting you with adverts

If you're fed up with adverts cluttering your screen, both Android and iOS devices give you some control over what appears and when. On Android, launch your app drawer and open Google Settings (which is different from the standard Settings app for Android). Tap the Ads option under Services to opt out of interest-based ads and reset your advertising ID. This prevents apps from building a profile of you and using this information to target you with ads they think you'll be interested in, which you may (justifiably) regard as an invasion of privacy.



To do the same on iOS, go to Settings and choose Privacy. Scroll down to Advertising and tap it. On the next screen, tap Limit Ad Tracking to turn it on, then tap Reset Advertising Identifier. If Limit Ad Tracking is greyed out, open Settings, General, Restrictions and enter your PIN. Scroll down to Advertising and set it to Allow Changes. Go back to Privacy/ Advertising and you'll now be able to change the setting. Additionally, iOS lets you opt out of location-based adverts, so that apps don't bombard

you with offers as you stroll down the high street. You'll find this option in Settings, Privacy, Location Services, System Services.

Frustratingly, changing these settings won't mean the end of adverts on your device.

You're still likely to see ads but at least they won't be targeted or as relevant, so you won't feel like your own phone or tablet is in cahoots with the advertisers.



## Review your app permissions

You can check individual app permissions to see what information they're collecting from your device by reviewing them through the Settings screen on your phone or tablet, but it's a bit of a slog. Instead, we'd recommend installing the excellent MyPermissions app for iOS and Android ([mypermissions.com](http://mypermissions.com)). This scans



your device to find out which apps you're running, then summarises potential information leaks, such as posting in your name, accessing your contacts and using your photos. Facebook and associated apps are, of course, particularly alarming in this respect. This kind of granular approach

takes time, but it's worth it if you want to strike the best balance between performance and privacy on your mobile device.

## Browse privately on your mobile device

The simplest way to stop your iPhone spying on your browsing is to tap the Private option in the bottom-left of your screen when you open a new tab in Safari. You can also go to Settings, Safari, then scroll down and turn on Do Not Track to stop web sites snooping on your browsing habits. Similarly, in Chrome on Android you can open a new Incognito tab and go to Settings, Privacy to select Do Not Track.

Using public Wi-Fi also leaves you open to snoops who may electronically spy on your communications to harvest passwords and other sensitive information. The best solution is to use a VPN (virtual private network), which hides your IP address and geographical location, and also encrypts your internet traffic so you can use public Wi-Fi with confidence. Our favourite VPNs are TunnelBear ([www.tunnelbear.com](http://www.tunnelbear.com)) and CyberGhost ([www.cyberghostvpn.com](http://www.cyberghostvpn.com)), which offer feature-limited free options but are worth the monthly subscription fee for unlimited usage. ■



## WHO'S SPYING ON YOU AND WHY

There are generally two kinds of 'spying' performed by your phone or tablet and the apps you install on it. First, there are companies that watch what you get up to so they can sell you stuff or pass on your information to other companies that want to sell you stuff. That's why, if you search Google for 'inkjet printer', you'll eventually have printer adverts turning up in Gmail; it's not magic, it's just marketing.

Second, there's the kind of general-purpose prying that's carried out routinely by government agencies such as GCHQ and the

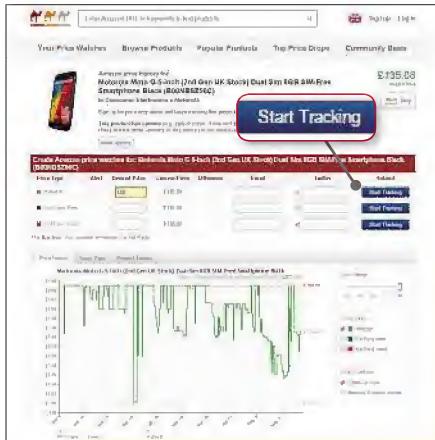
NSA. Why do they care whether you prefer to eat in KFC or Nando's? They don't, but in a shining example of the sledgehammer-to-crack-a-nut principle, they scoop up billions of bytes of data a day 'just in case', so they've got it if you become a person of interest in the future. This is what scares campaigners the most, since what's perfectly acceptable behaviour now (watching *Britain's Got Talent*, say) may become unacceptable in the future and your past behaviour could be held against you. That example may be trivial, but our concern is genuine.

# Track price drops and rises online

Never miss a bargain again by using the web to pinpoint the best times to buy specific products. **Robert Irvine** reveals how to make the waiting game pay off

## Track price changes on Amazon

Prices on Amazon are constantly fluctuating, which means a product you buy today may be several pounds cheaper tomorrow. The best way to keep on top of these changes is to track price drops using CamelCamelCamel ([uk.camelcamelcamel.com](http://uk.camelcamelcamel.com)) – the odd name refers to the hump-shaped graphs the site uses to depict price rises and drops. Search for an item you'd like to buy, or copy and paste its Amazon URL, and CamelCamelCamel will produce a price-history chart that lets you see if the current cost is cheaper or dearer than one month, six months or one year ago. Tell the site how much you're willing to pay for the item, and CamelCamelCamel will monitor its price and alert you via email or tweet as soon as it drops to or below your desired amount. CamelCamelCamel also lets you import your Amazon wishlist to create automatic price watches for products you'd like to buy, and also lists the biggest price drops in each Amazon department over the last week, so you never miss out on a bargain.



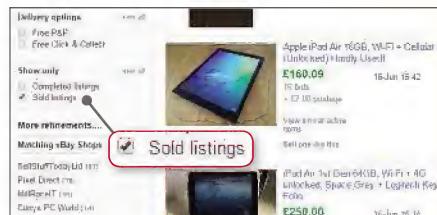
If you don't have time to visit the CamelCamelCamel website, you can install its add-on for Chrome and Firefox, called The Camelizer ([uk.camelcamelcamel.com/camelizer](http://uk.camelcamelcamel.com/camelizer)). Just



click its toolbar button when you're viewing a product page to see a price-history graph, which also includes data for third-party sellers, and to create a price watch for that item.

## Save and make more money on eBay

It can be difficult to decide on a starting price for items that you sell on eBay – set it too high and you might not attract any bids, but start too low and you won't make much profit. You can get a rough idea of how much the product usually sells for by searching for it on eBay and selecting the 'Sold listings' option on the left-hand side of the results page.



To find out if now is the best time to sell or buy a specific item, look it up on Bidvoy ([uk.bidvoy.net](http://uk.bidvoy.net)). This brilliant site tells you the average price products are selling for, so you don't ask too much or too little for yours. It even tells you which times of day and week are the most lucrative to sell items and the cheapest to buy them, and whether you'll get a better price on Amazon.

Bidvoy presents its data as a line graph that shows the final prices of



eBay auctions and buy-it-now sales over the last six months, so you can easily spot trends and see whether the value of the item is rising or falling. It also provides a sample of current listings for that product and tells you whether they're over- or under-priced. This graph (below) suggests that now would be the worst time to sell a 16GB iPad Air, because it's going for more than £60 less than its average price and £92 less than its peak price.



## Wait for apps to become cheaper

Although paid-for apps for your phone or tablet cost a few quid at most, you can save money by waiting for time-limited discounts or for the apps to go completely free. To track the prices of iPhone and iPad apps, visit the Price Drops page at AppShopper ([appshopper.com/prices](http://appshopper.com/prices)). This lists all the most recent price changes for iOS and lets you click straight through to the iTunes store to buy each newly discounted or free app. When we visited, bargains included Video



The AppShopper website features a search bar and filters for 'GENERAL', 'POPULAR', 'TOP 100', and 'CATEGORIES'. It displays a grid of discounted apps with their original price and current price (e.g., \$3.99), download count, and rating.

Downloader Pro (free for one day, usually \$3.99) and finance app Saver 2 – Money Manager (now free, was \$4.99). Add apps you want to your Wishlist and you'll be notified as soon as their price drops, or follow AppShopper on Twitter for news of the latest discounts.

For Android apps, the Price Reduced page at AppBrain ([bit.ly/appbrain374](http://bit.ly/appbrain374)) works in the same way as AppShopper, but each app is also given a rating out of 100 from the AppBrain team. You can filter the list to show only apps from a specific category, those that are 'hot' today or this week, or the most popular discounted apps in the UK.

There's also a free AppBrain App Market app, called Apop ([bit.ly/appbrainapp374](http://bit.ly/appbrainapp374)) that lets you find bargains directly from your mobile

device. Pick of the bunch at the time of writing was the comprehensive football results and statistics app Ultimate Premier League 15/16, reduced from £9.99 to 99p.

## Never pay full price for ebooks

The excellent ebook-deals website eReaderIQ ([uk.ereaderiq.com](http://uk.ereaderiq.com)) has a comprehensive Popular Price Drops page ([uk.ereaderiq.com/drops](http://uk.ereaderiq.com/drops)) that shows you which books are now available for less or for free in Amazon's Kindle store. You can filter these by minimum discount, maximum price, genre, length and other useful criteria, then click the Track It button to be notified by email when the price changes again. Usefully, eReaderIQ lets you import your reading wishlist from Amazon, and also provides a price-history chart and summary for each title, so you can see when it was most and least expensive.

The eReaderIQ website includes a 'Popular Price Drops' section with a chart showing price fluctuations over the past 24 hours. A specific deal for the book 'England' is highlighted with a red box, showing its original price of \$3.99 and a discounted price of \$0.99, along with a 'Get It' and 'Track It' button.

## Book flights at the cheapest times

The cost of air travel can vary wildly depending on the time of day, week and year that you book your flight. Fortunately, there are several useful tools for tracking airfares, of which our favourite is Skyscanner's Price Alerts feature ([bit.ly/skyscanner374](http://bit.ly/skyscanner374)). Simply search for a flight, specifying exact airports and dates, then when the results appear, click the Get Price Alerts button in the top-left corner. Skyscanner will monitor fares from dozens of airlines every day, and email you as soon as prices drop (or rise), so you can book your seat while it's cheap.

Alternatively, you can decide when to take your holiday based on the least expensive time to fly by selecting

The Skyscanner website allows users to search for flights between London (Any) and Auckland (Any) on 9th Sep. A red box highlights the 'Get Price Alerts' button. Below the search bar, a calendar shows flight prices for each day of the month, with a red box highlighting the 1st of September.



'Cheapest month' in the drop-down Depart menu on the Skyscanner homepage. When the calendar appears, switch to Chart view to see the cheapest days in the cheapest month to fly out and return.

## Buy PC and console games for less

The price of digital games changes from store to store, and from week to week, with special offers and bundles often significantly reducing the amount you pay for a specific title. Make sure you don't get ripped off by using IsThereAnyDeal.com ([isthereanydeal.com](http://isthereanydeal.com)) to compare current and past game prices from sites including Steam, GamersGate and Origin, including the lowest recorded amount for each title. If there's a particular game you want to buy, you can set a maximum price and add it to your 'wishlist' to be notified of any drops. IsThereAnyDeal.com also rounds up vouchers, time-limited discounts and bundle deals, so you never pay full price for game again.

The Game Crawler UK website displays a game history for 'Assassin's Creed 3' with reviews and a price history chart. A red box highlights the 'Price Watch' button for the game.

For console games (and the consoles themselves), you can use the Price Watch tool at Game Crawler UK ([bit.ly/gamecrawler374](http://bit.ly/gamecrawler374)) to discover the best place to buy from as soon as the price comes down. ■

The Game Crawler UK website shows a price watch for 'The Elder Scrolls Online (PS4)' on PlayStation 4. It displays the platform, release date, best price (\$34.88), and a 'Price Watch This!' button. Another 'Price Watch This!' button is shown below with a target price of \$20.00.



# Broadband Deals

Call FREE on 0800 083 2357 to switch your broadband

	Provider	Package name	Monthly price	Contract length	Broadband speed	Allowance	First-year cost*
1	TalkTalk	TalkTalk: Broadband	£5.00 (12 months FREE)	18 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	CHEAPEST £0.00
2	Sky	Sky: Broadband & Calls	£7.50 (12 months FREE)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£0.00
3	plusnet	Plusnet: Broadband & Calls	£9.99 (£2.50 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£30.00
4	EE	EE: Broadband & Calls	£9.95 (£2.95 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited **	£35.40
5	TalkTalk	TalkTalk Fibre Broadband	£15.00 (£5 for 12 months)	18 months	38Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£60.00
6	Virgin media	Virgin: Broadband & Calls	£17.50 (12 months HALF PRICE)	18 months	50Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited **	£105.00
7	plusnet	Plusnet: Fibre Broadband & Calls	£14.99 (£5 for 6 months)	18 months	38Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£119.94
8	EE	EE: Fibre Broadband & Calls	£19.95 (£9.95 for 6 months)	18 months	38Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£179.40
9	Sky	Sky: Fibre Broadband & Calls	£20.00 (6 months HALF PRICE)	18 months	38Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£180.00
10	Virgin media	Virgin: Broadband & Calls	£30.00 (£20 for 12 months)	18 months	152Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited **	FASTEST £240.00

Call 0800 083 2357 or visit [www.broadbandgenie.co.uk/webuser](http://www.broadbandgenie.co.uk/webuser)

Terms & Conditions apply - see ISP sites for details

\*First-year cost does not include line rental. Cost is calculated at monthly price x12 with all introductory offers subtracted. Additional charges incurred outside of free inclusive calls not included in first-year cost.

\*\* Fair-usage or restriction policy applies.

Data supplied by [www.broadbandgenie.co.uk](http://www.broadbandgenie.co.uk). Correct as of 17 June 2015.

**Ofcom**

Broadband Genie's helpline is powered by Simplify Digital, the Ofcom-accredited switching service



# Take a Screen Break

Technology moves so quickly that it's easy to forget big stories from only a few years ago. This issue we're asking you to think back to 2008



**1** What was the name of the popular 2008 internet meme that tricked you into clicking a link to the Rick Astley video *Never Gonna Give You Up*?



**2** Which major software release in September 2008 was announced through a 38-page comic ([bit.ly/comic374](http://bit.ly/comic374))?

**3** Approximately how many emails were sent per day in 2008: 13 million, 130 million or 1.3 billion?

**4** What's the name of the Swedish music-streaming service that launched in October 2008?

**5** Which song became the first to sell more than 500,000 downloads in July 2008?

**6** Nintendo's Wii Fit had lots of us bouncing around our living rooms in 2008. But what was the name of the accessory you stood on (pictured) to control the game?



**7** Which social-networking site was purchased by AOL in March 2008 for a reported \$850m?



**8** What type of website was Cuil, which launched in July 2008 and closed two years later?

**9** What was the name of Google's first phone, which went on sale in the UK in October 2008?

**10** Which range of pocket-sized, easy-to-use digital camcorders (pictured) proved incredibly popular in 2008?



**11** According to Google, who was the most searched-for politician among UK users in 2008?

**12** In September 2008, the largest machine and largest experimental facility in the world went 'live'. What is its name?

## CAN YOU IDENTIFY THESE POPULAR WEBSITES FROM 2008?



Get the answers online at [www.webuser.co.uk/quiz374](http://www.webuser.co.uk/quiz374)

## COMPETITIONS

### WIN 1 OF 5

#### KitSound Sonar Bluetooth speakers

KitSound's new Sonar is a powerful wireless speaker that also provides a portable lightshow. When you play music, the multi-coloured LED modes come to life. It has a battery life of six hours and Bluetooth range of 10 metres. To enter, email your address to [webusercomp@dennis.co.uk](mailto:webusercomp@dennis.co.uk) with 'sonar' in the subject line. For more info on KitSound products, visit [www.kitsound.co.uk](http://www.kitsound.co.uk) and follow KitSound on Twitter @KitSoundUK.



WORTH  
£50  
EACH

### WIN 1 OF 6

#### 6-in-1 Multi-Charger

Available now from Genie Gadgets, this stylish and compact charger is a must-have device for any household that's home to several phones and tablets. It can charge six devices at the same time, at a powerful 33 watts. To enter, email your address to [webusercomp@dennis.co.uk](mailto:webusercomp@dennis.co.uk) with 'charger' in the subject line. For more information, visit [www.geniegadgets.com](http://www.geniegadgets.com) and follow Genie Gadgets on Twitter (@GenieGadgets) and Instagram ([bit.ly/gram374](http://bit.ly/gram374)).



WORTH  
£24.95  
EACH



## Store all your photos and videos online with Google Photos

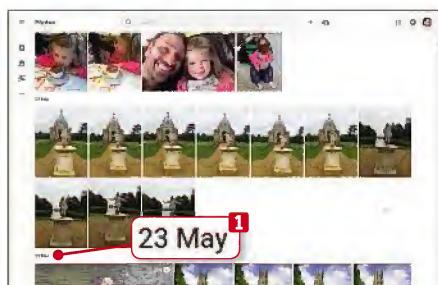
[photos.google.com](http://photos.google.com)

Google's new backup and sync service lets you store unlimited photos and videos in the cloud

**G**oogle Photos has been available for some time as part of Google+, but the search giant has now taken the wise step of spinning it off into a separate product, freeing it from the constraints of the widely ignored social network and boosting its appeal with the promise of unlimited storage – not just for photos but for videos, too. It's

available for PC, Android and iOS, so you can upload and access your content from anywhere.

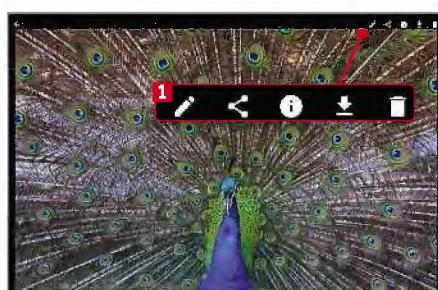
The service also automatically improves your pictures and transforms still shots into stories, movies and animations. Snap a sequence of landscape images and it will even stitch them into a panorama for you.



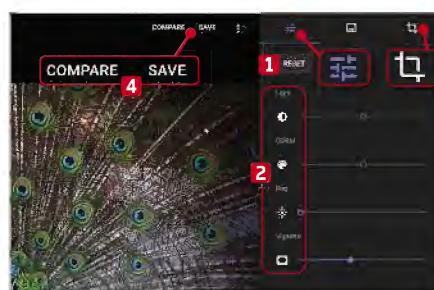
**1** Install the Photos app on your mobile devices to auto-upload your photos. Any images you have stored on Google+ will appear in the new service as well. When you log into the website, you'll see the photos and videos sorted by date. **1** A sequence of five or more photos can be tuned into an animation.



**2** Click the Assistant button **1** to view creations produced automatically, such as collages, stories, animations, stylised photos and panoramas. Click an item to view it. Hover your mouse over something to get the option to remove it. If you like something, you can save it to your library. **2**



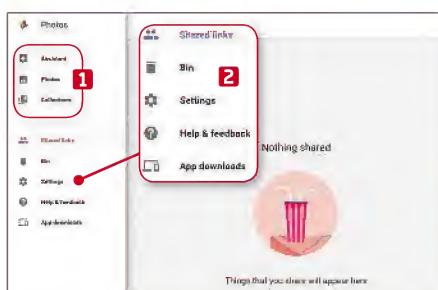
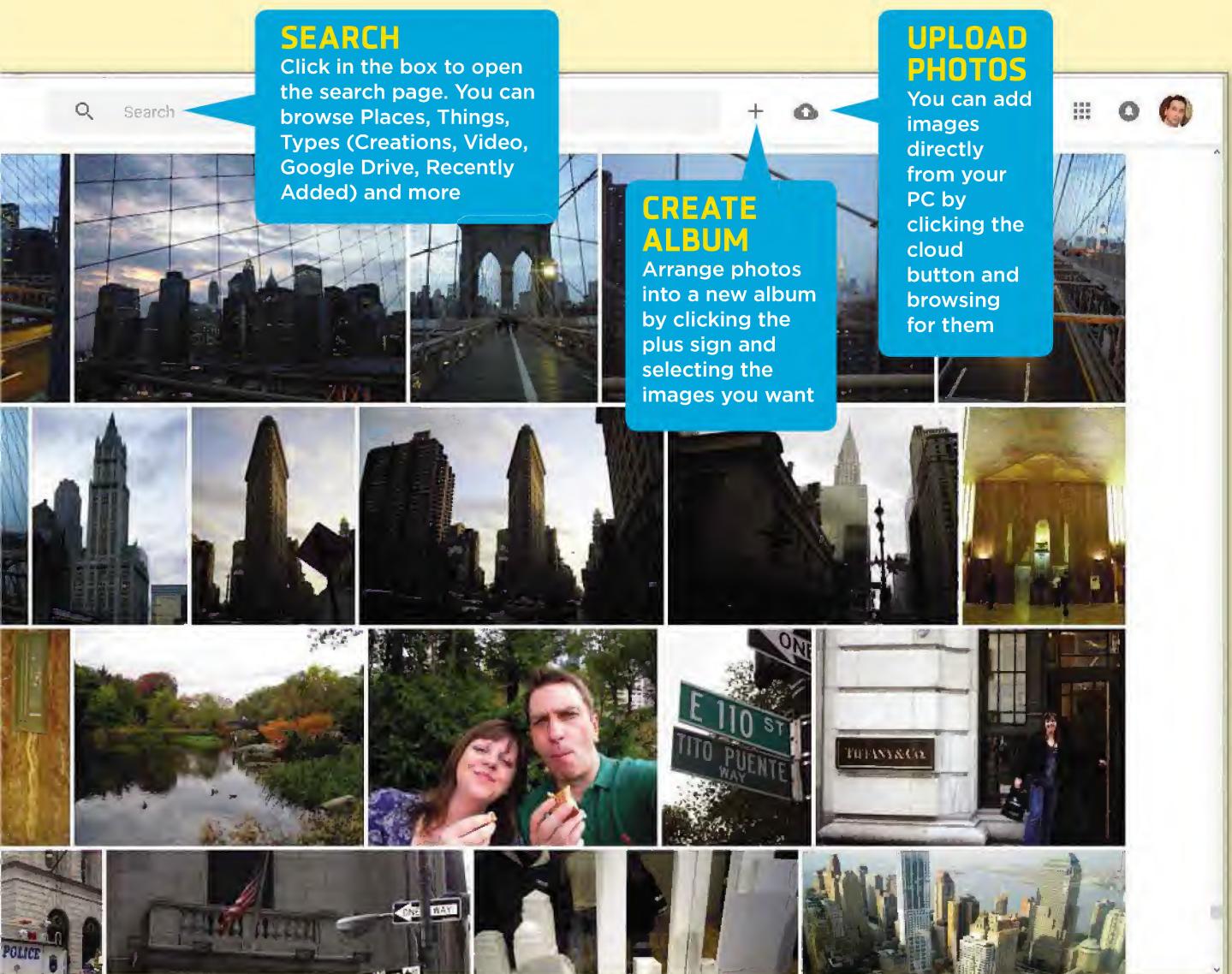
**3** Select a photo to view it full screen. Hover over the image to display buttons that let you edit the photo, share it, view details about it (its name, file size, resolution and more), download a copy or bin it. **1** Deleting a photo will remove it from Google and all your synced mobile devices.



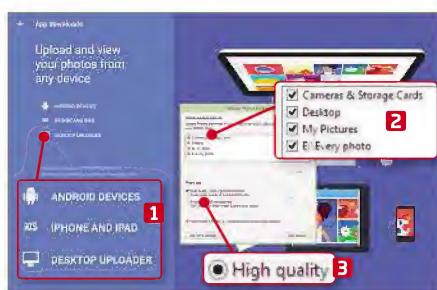
**4** Choose to edit an image and you can make automatic corrections **1** or manually adjust the Light (brightness), Colour, Pop (vibrancy) and Vignette. **2** You can also apply a range of filters or crop the picture. **3** Click and hold Compare to see the changes, or Save to make them permanent. **4**



**5** Select a filter **1** to preview its effect on your photo. Use the slider **2** to adjust the strength of the effect. Click the three dots to revert to the original image, undoing any changes, or save the new version as a copy, leaving the original untouched.



**6** Click the menu button on the left to show the sidebar. You can access the Assistant, and view Photos or Collections; **1** as well as view any shared links, see images in the bin (these are deleted permanently after 60 days), access Settings, get help or send feedback, and download apps for Android, iOS or PC. **2**



**7** The PC software lets you back up photos automatically from your computer. Choose the default backup sources **1** and add any additional locations. **2** Make sure you choose 'High quality' as the photo size, **3** because this gives you unlimited storage. Click 'Start backup' to begin uploading.



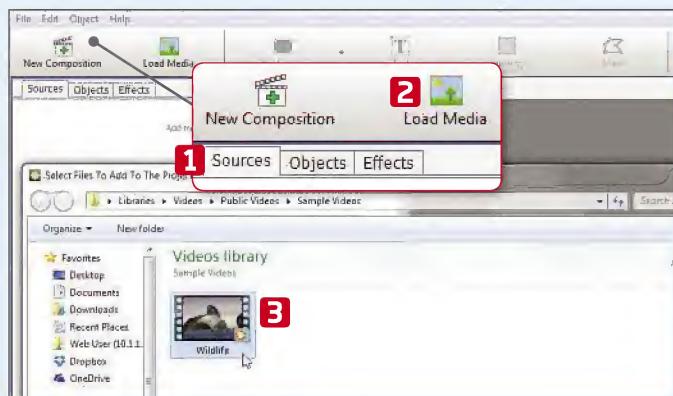
**8** You can make changes to multiple images simultaneously. Hover your mouse over a thumbnail and click the tick in the top-left corner. **1** Select as many photos as you want. The number of selected items is shown at the top. **2** You can share the images, add them to an album, or download or delete them. **3**

# Add animation to your videos

Express Animate: [bit.ly/express374](http://bit.ly/express374) | 20 mins | XP, Vista, 7, 8+

Express Animate lets you create animations from scratch or drag an item into an existing photo or video, then use the program's timeline to control its movements. The software looks complex at first, but it provides very precise control over the timing and placement of your animated objects, so you can create more ambitious compositions as your confidence and skills grow.

In this Workshop, we'll make an animated title for a video using techniques that can also be used for creating a variety of other animations. You'll need a video file saved in a widely recognised format such as MP4 – use one of your own or download any video if you just want to experiment. We'll show you how to trim the clip to your desired length, then add a title and animate it by changing its colour, position, size and rotation. We're using video and text, but you can also work with still images, which makes Express Animate great for creating your own animated GIFs.



1 Download, install and run Express Animate, then add the videos you want to use by dragging and dropping them to the Sources tab 1 in the project panel. You can also click Load Media 2 to find the files on your PC. 3



2 To add a video to your composition, drag and drop it to the canvas. 1 You can trim your video by dragging either end of the duration bar to the point where you want it to start or end. 2 This method can be used to alter the time when images, text and shapes are displayed, too.



3 If you trimmed the start of your video, you'll need to reposition it within your composition. To do this, make sure it's still selected in the Composition Panel and drag its duration bar so the coloured part snaps to the start of the composition. 1



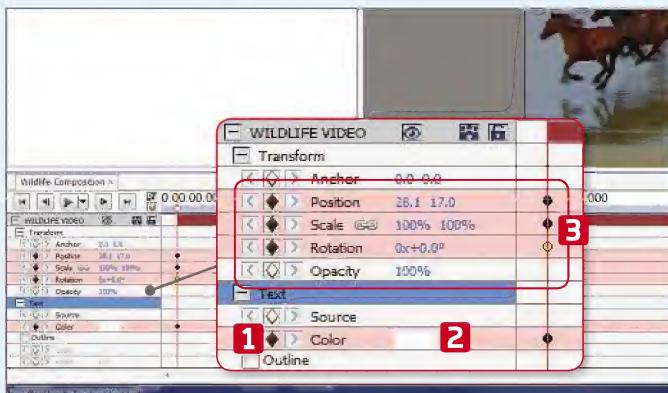
4 To add a title to your video, select Text 1 and click the position on the canvas where you'd like it to be placed. Choose a font 2 and size. 3 The duration of the title and position at which it appears can be altered using the duration bar, as described in the previous steps.



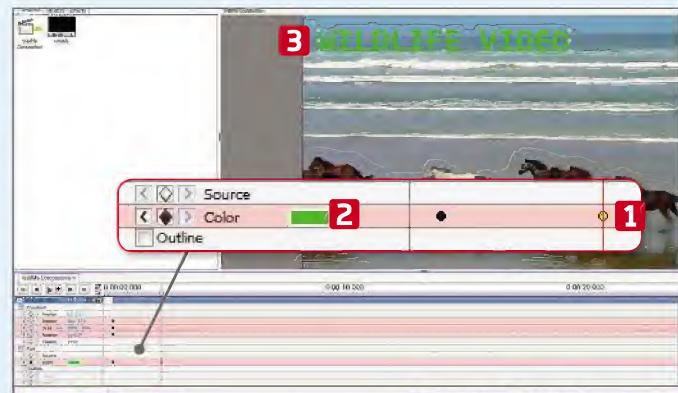
## EXPERT TIP

### Edward Munn says

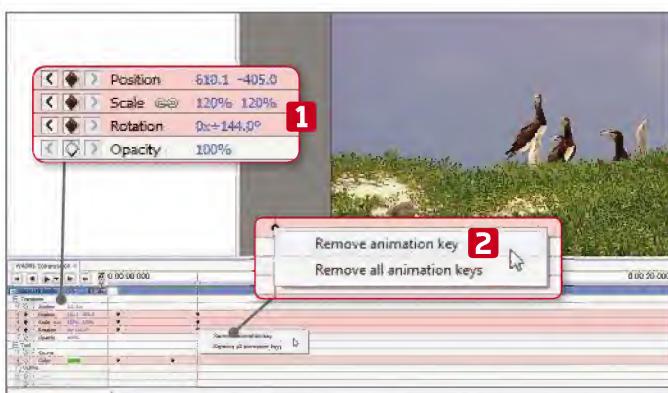
We found the software changed default icons on some of our image types. To change them back, download and run NirSoft's portable FileTypesMan (search [www.nirsoft.net](http://www.nirsoft.net) for 'filetypesman'). Find the affected image types (such as JPEG, TIF and PNG), then change the text in the Default Icon box to 'C:\Windows\System32\imageres.dll,67' or click the three-dot (...) button and choose an option.



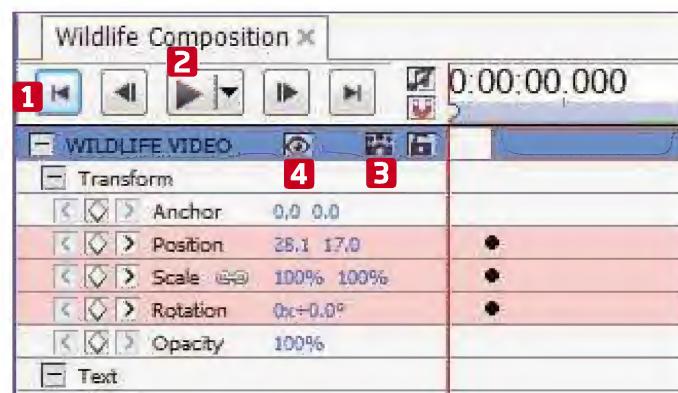
**5** To change the colour of the text, click the position in the timeline where it appears, select New Key next to Color **1** and click the white box to choose a new colour. **2** You can set the starting Position, Scale, Rotation or Opacity **3** by adding keys for each property and choosing its settings.



**6** Once you've specified the title's starting information, you can animate it by adding keys with different settings further along the timeline. For example, add a second key for Color **1** and select a different colour **2** to make the text **3** change from one hue to the next as the video is played.



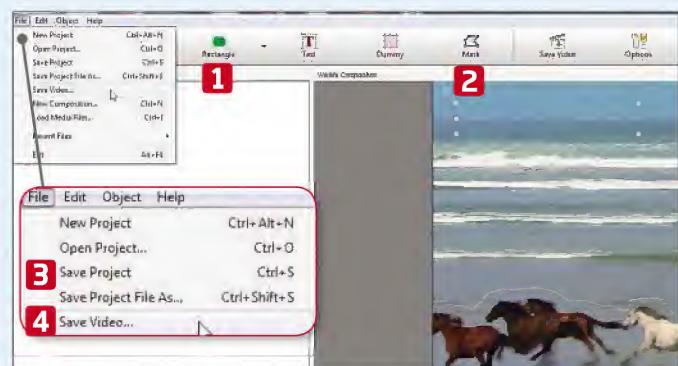
**7** You can add multiple keys for Position, Scale, Rotation and Opacity **1** to control exactly how your title moves within your video. To delete a key, right-click it and select 'Remove animation key'. **2**



**8** To preview the results, click Go to Start, **1** then 'Start playback' (space bar). **2** To see only your title in the preview, click Enable Solo alongside its name **3** or to watch the video without your animation, click Hide Object. **4**



**9** You can zoom in on your composition by scrolling the mouse wheel over the canvas or using the Scale control above. **1** If your PC struggles to play high-resolution videos, you can change the quality of the preview using the drop-down menu. **2**



**10** Add more animation to your video by adding other objects including images, shapes **1** and masks. **2** Once you're happy with your composition, save your project by clicking File, Save Project **3** and export the video by selecting Save Video... **4**

# Control your PC with your voice

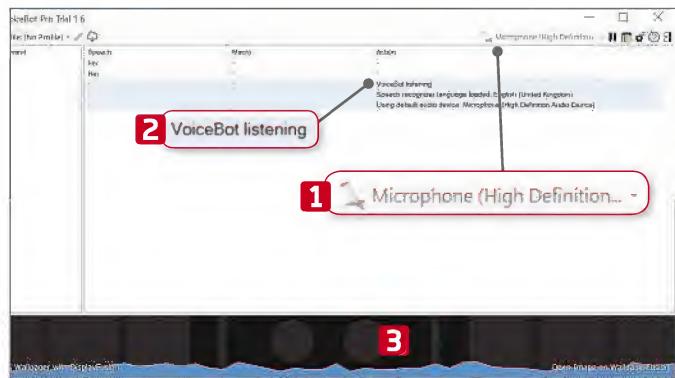
**V**irtual assistants such as Siri and Google let you interact with your smartphone or tablet using only your voice. VoiceBot is a free program that aims to make the same possible on your PC, letting you speak commands to control

**VoiceBot:** [www.voicebot.net](http://www.voicebot.net) |  10 mins |  Vista, 7, 8+

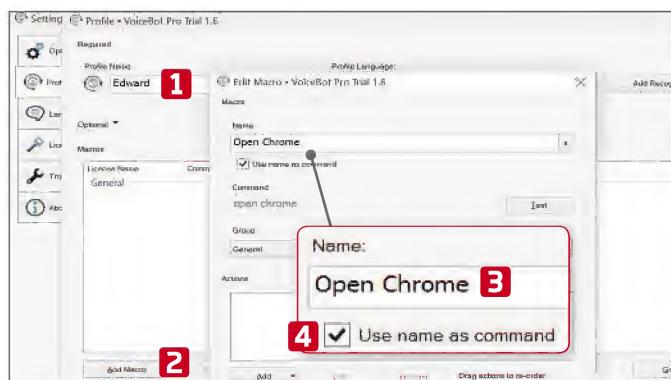
applications and execute keyboard shortcuts. In this Workshop, we show you how to set up the program and create your first voice command.



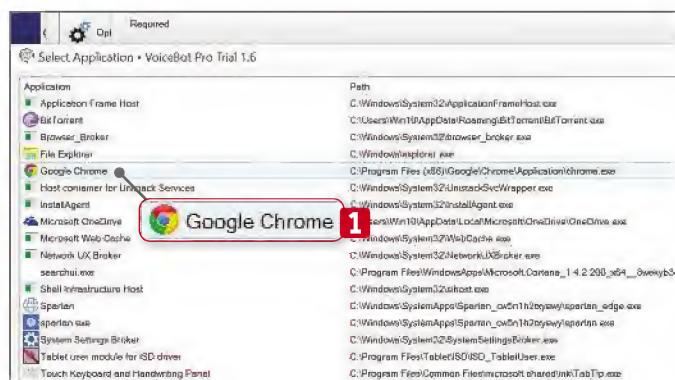
**1** Download and install VoiceBot and click No when asked if you'd like to download a ready-made game profile. Click the Settings cog, choose Languages **1** and make sure English: United Kingdom **2** is selected. Click Apply **3** and OK.



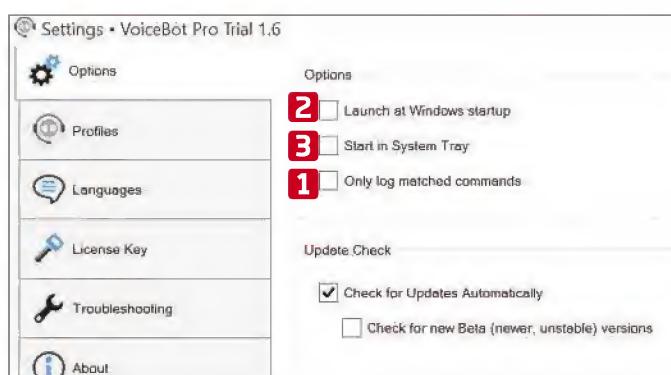
**2** Select the microphone you want to use by clicking the drop-down menu and choosing the appropriate device from the list that appears. **1** 'VoiceBot listening' **2** appears in the log and a soundwave represents any noise detected by the microphone. **3**



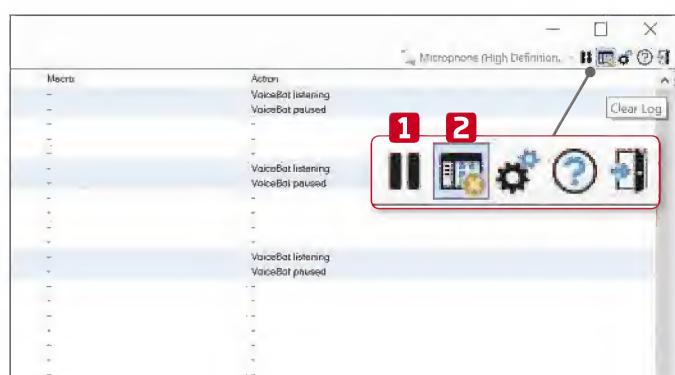
**3** To set up a profile, click 'Profile: (No Profile)' and New Profile. Enter a name for it, **1** then click Add Macro **2** to set up your first voice command. We've chosen to create a command to launch Chrome. Type a name, such as Open Chrome, **3** and leave 'Use name as command' **4** ticked.



**4** Next, click Add to choose an action for your command. Select Start Program and choose (in this example) Google Chrome **1** before clicking OK three times. Your command is listed in the toolbar. Minimise VoiceBot and say 'Open Chrome' to open the browser.



**5** All detected speech is shown in the program's log. If you want only matched commands to be shown, click Settings and tick 'Only log matched commands'. **1** You can set VoiceBot to launch on start up **2** and start in the notification area of the System Tray **3** by ticking the appropriate boxes.



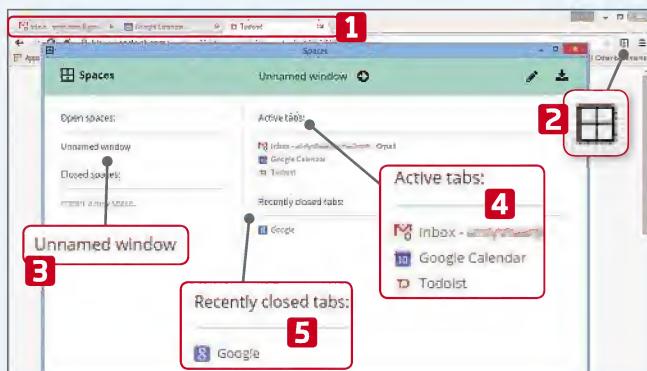
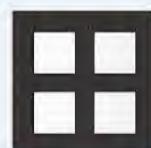
**6** Click Profiles to add, edit or remove a profile. You can add more Macros by clicking a profile and selecting Add Macro. Close the settings and click the pause icon **1** to stop VoiceBot. You can clear the status log by clicking Clear Log. **2**

# Speed up your browsing by grouping Chrome tabs

**G**rouping tabs together is a simple way of keeping your browser organised. You can open and close groups of websites in a couple of clicks, so when you move from one task to another, all your favourite tools are ready and

**Spaces for Chrome:** [bit.ly/spaces374](http://bit.ly/spaces374) |  10 mins |  Chrome

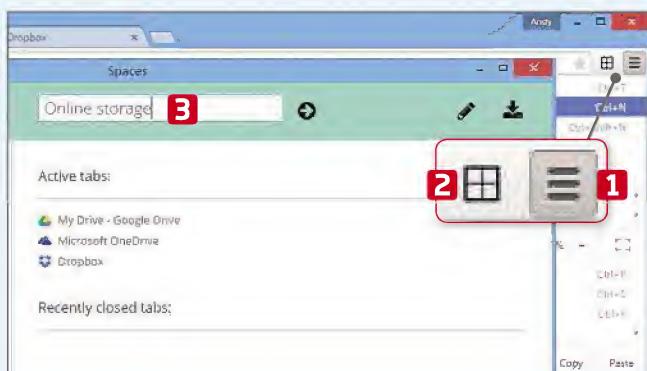
waiting for you. You've been able to group tabs in Firefox for years, and you can now do it in Chrome by installing an add-on called Spaces.



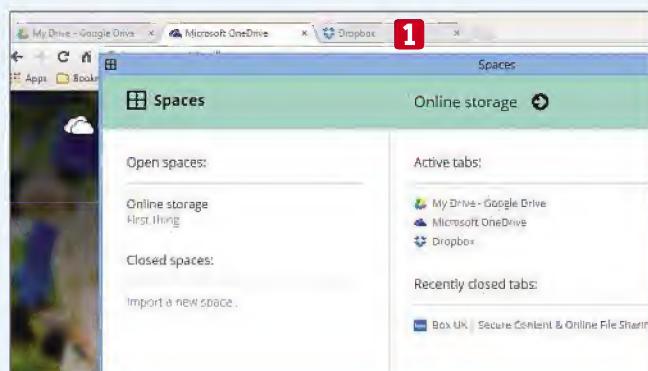
**1** Open all the tabs you want to group together in a single Chrome window. **1** Click the Spaces icon on the toolbar, **2** then click 'Unnamed window'. **3** Active **4** and 'Recently closed' **5** tabs are listed on the right so you can check you've got the correct tabs open.



**2** To give the group a name that will help you identify it, **1** click the 'Rename space' button, **2** type a name into the box **2** and press Enter to save it. Click the arrow **3** to open the group in Chrome if it isn't already loaded.



**3** To set up another group, open a new Window in Chrome (from the menu button **1** or just press Ctrl+N). Open the tabs you'd like to include in this second group, then click the Spaces button **2** to open the Spaces window and give the group a name. **3**



**4** Any new tabs opened in a group's window **1** will be added automatically and reopened the next time you open that group. If you want to remove a tab from a group, just close it before you close the group's Window. It won't reappear the next time you open the group.



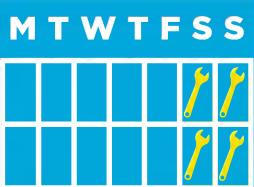
**5** To quickly open a group or switch between them, press Ctrl+Shift+S for the 'Quick switch spaces' window. **1** You can use the mouse, or the cursor and Enter keys, to select a different group. Or type a group's name **2** and press Enter when the one you want is highlighted.



**6** Groups are saved from one session to the next but you can also import and export Spaces to share with other people. Click the 'Export space' button **1** to create a text file that lists web addresses for the sites in your group. The 'Import a new space' link **2** lets you paste in a new list. **3**

# Weekend Project

Get to grips with some serious PC DIY to boost your computer's performance

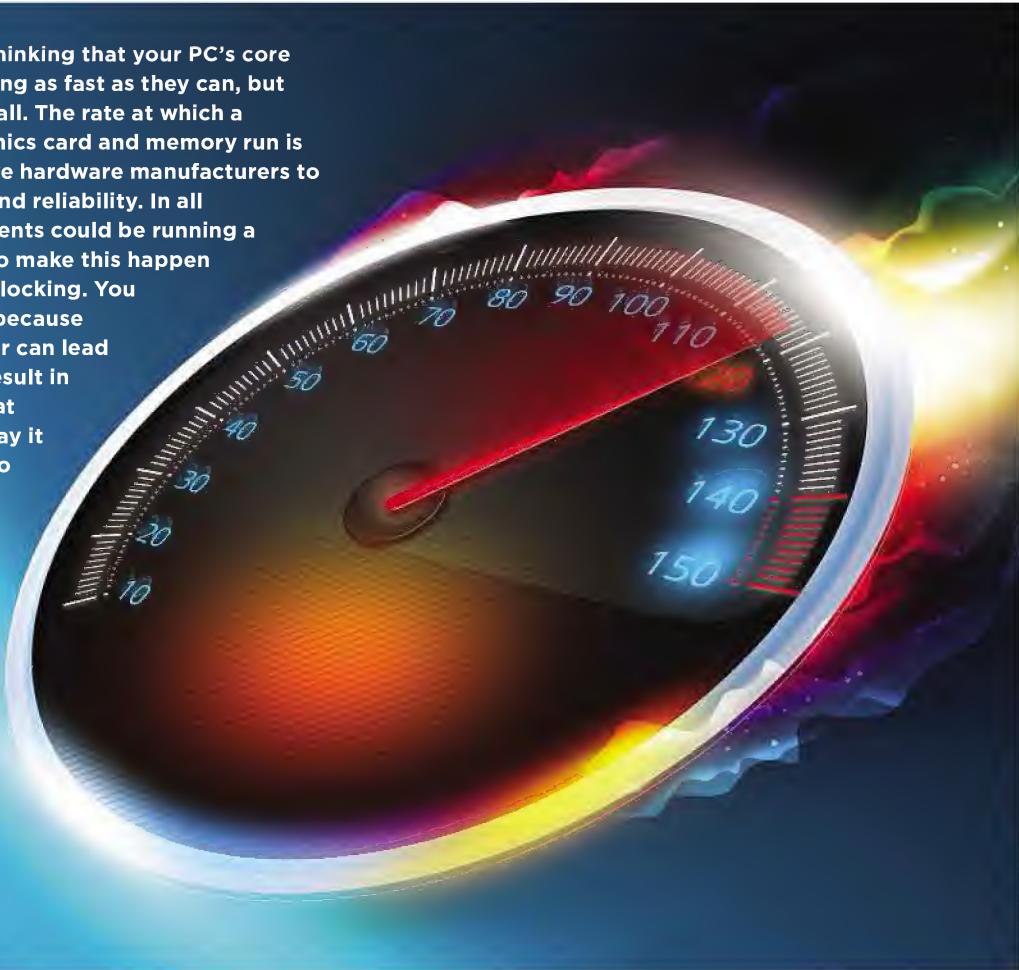


How to...

## Make your PC go faster than it's supposed to

Like a car's engine, your PC's components can be tuned for better performance. **Wayne Williams** shows you how

You'd be forgiven for thinking that your PC's core components are running as fast as they can, but that's not the case at all. The rate at which a computer's processor, graphics card and memory run is actually set by the respective hardware manufacturers to deliver a balance of speed and reliability. In all likelihood, your PC's components could be running a lot faster, and it's possible to make this happen using a process called overclocking. You have to be careful, though, because pushing the hardware too far can lead to overheating, which can result in errors, crashes or worse. That said, most manufacturers play it very safe, and it's possible to get more power from your hardware without running into danger.



### What is overclocking?

Each core component in your PC runs at a clock rate set by the manufacturer. As you may guess from the name, overclocking is the process of pushing the hardware to run at a higher clock rate than the recommended speed.

The overclocking process can be carried out through the BIOS or by using a dedicated piece of software. It's worth pointing out that every PC is different, so

even if you have two computers that, on paper, have the same hardware, it doesn't mean you'll be able to overclock them to the same degree.

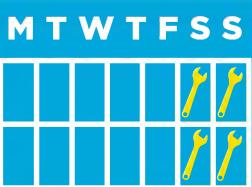
With so many different types of hardware available, it's impossible to write a guide that covers everything, so while this Weekend Project is enough to get you started, you might want to search the web for more about overclocking your particular make and model of hardware.

### Keep it cool

Heat is the enemy of electrical components and the faster your hardware runs, the more heat it will generate. This can lead to problems, including crashes and even – in a worst-case scenario – hardware failure. If you're going to overclock components beyond their safe limits, you need to consider improving your PC's cooling system, perhaps by adding extra fans to disperse the heat

# Weekend Project

Get to grips with some serious PC DIY to boost your computer's performance

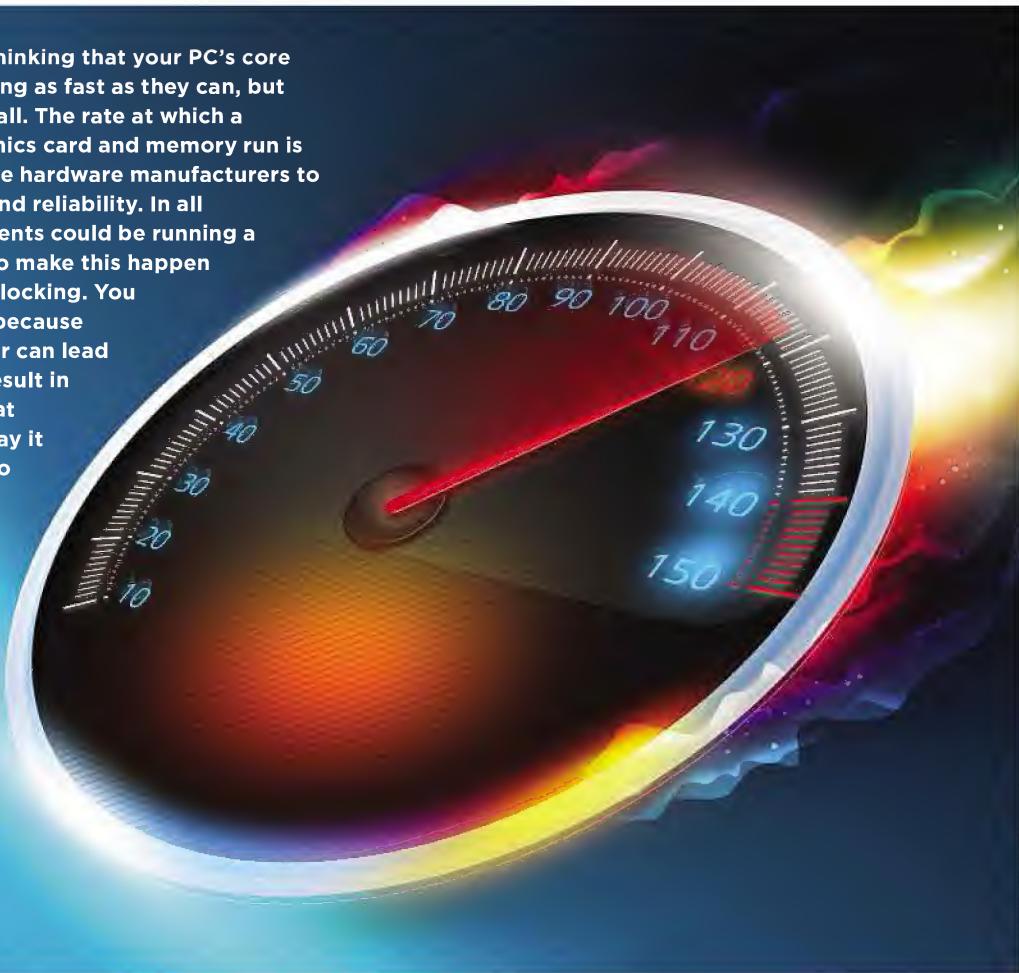


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The overclocking process can be carried out through the BIOS or by using a dedicated piece of software. It's worth pointing out that every PC is different, so

even if you have two computers that, on paper, have the same hardware, it doesn't mean you'll be able to overclock them to the same degree.

With so many different types of hardware available, it's impossible to write a guide that covers everything, so while this Weekend Project is enough to get you started, you might want to search the web for more about overclocking your particular make and model of hardware.

### Keep it cool

Heat is the enemy of electrical components and the faster your hardware runs, the more heat it will generate. This can lead to problems, including crashes and even – in a worst-case scenario – hardware failure. If you're going to overclock components beyond their safe limits, you need to consider improving your PC's cooling system, perhaps by adding extra fans to disperse the heat

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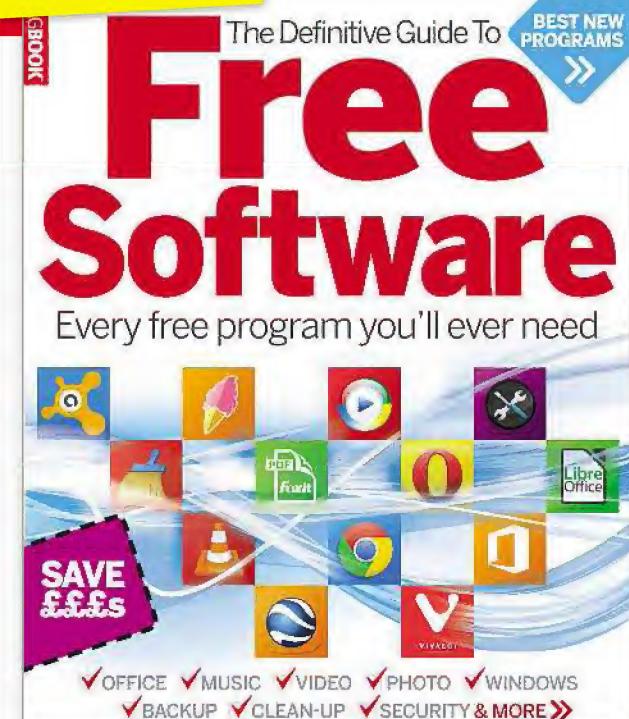
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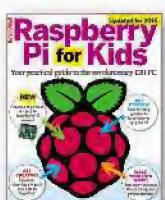
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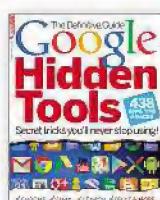
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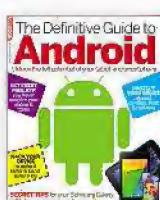
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You can overclock a graphics card to get better performance but make sure it stays cool

One of the program's most impressive features is the ability to view performance information and control key settings using your phone. Install and run the MSI Afterburner Remote Server on your PC, then grab the free Android or iOS app. We show you how to use Afterburner in our Mini Workshop below.

Although MSI Afterburner has its own built-in benchmarking software (called Kombustor and based on the well-known Furmark software) you can also benchmark the results of your overclocking using other tools such as BurnInTest or Valley Benchmark



A super-detailed 3D valley is rendered to test your graphics in Valley Benchmark



Kingston's HyperX FURY DDR4 memory is configured to overclock itself

([bit.ly/valbm374](http://bit.ly/valbm374)). Valley Benchmark is named after the rendered 3D valley it uses to benchmark your hardware. It offers per-frame GPU temperature and clock monitoring.

Just as you have to take care when overclocking a CPU, you should only overclock a graphics card in gradual steps, by increasing the core clock by 10MHz at a time. Don't push your card too hard or it may overheat and become unstable.

### Overclock your memory

You won't get the performance benefits from overclocking your memory that you will from overclocking your CPU or graphics card, but it may make your PC's Desktop and any running applications respond a little more snappily. Some high-end memory, such as Kingston's HyperX FURY DDR4 ([www.kingston.com](http://www.kingston.com)), will automatically recognise the host platform and overclock itself to the highest published frequency without the need for user input. If your memory isn't

as clever as that, but is still at least DDR3, you can overclock it manually through the BIOS. Find the Memory Frequency setting (it will be in the same area as all the CPU overclocking functions) and push it up in the usual tiny increments.

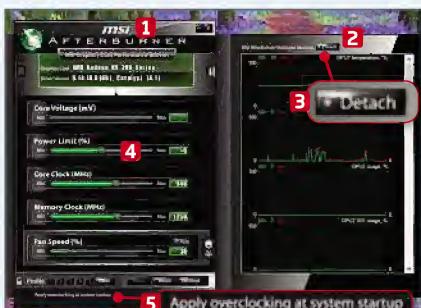
SiSoft Sandra ([www.sisoftware.net](http://www.sisoftware.net)) has a useful memory bandwidth test you can run to find out how much your memory's performance has been boosted. If you experience crashes and freezes after overclocking, go back into BIOS and reverse the changes. ■



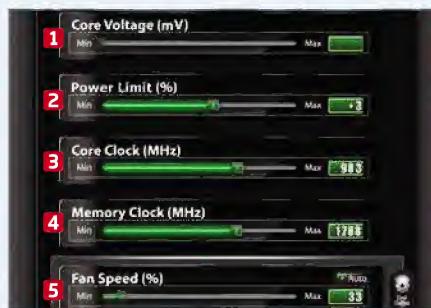
SiSoft Sandra can show whether your PC has benefited from overclocking



### MINI WORKSHOP | Overclock your graphics card using MSI Afterburner



**1** MSI afterburner's two main modules – the Performance Booster **1** and the Hardware Monitor **2** – are linked together but they can be detached. **3** The sliders **4** lets you adjust different settings. Changes that you make can be saved as individual profiles and you can apply overclocking at system startup. **5**



**2** Core Voltage **1** lets you adjust the GPU's overclocking capability. Power Limit **2** lets you provide additional electricity to the card. You can increase performance by adjusting the Core Clock, **3** while Memory Clock **4** makes data processing more efficient. If things start to get too hot, turn up the Fan Speed. **5**



**3** To undo all your changes, click Reset. **1** The Settings button **2** opens the MSI Afterburner Properties window. You can set how the program works under General **3** and unlock additional features. Elsewhere, you can toggle the on-screen display on or off **4** and configure the screen and video capture settings. **5**

### NEXT ISSUE

How To... Root your Android device

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# Web User's Top Tips

Charge your phone, tablet and laptop faster and more safely. Our experts reveal their secrets

## TOP TIPS FOR FAST AND SAFE CHARGING

### Use a surge protector

**T**hunderstorms become common in the summer months and lightning strikes can cause spikes in the mains power supply, which can damage any devices you have plugged in to charge, particularly sensitive equipment such as phones, tablets and laptops.

Spikes in the mains power can also be caused by other equipment, so it's worth investing in a surge protector ([bit.ly/surge374](http://bit.ly/surge374) – available from Maplin from around £5). These typically have four or six sockets to allow multiple devices such as laptops, monitors, USB drives, phone and tablet chargers all to be plugged in on the same protected power outlet. Some surge protectors, such as the Belkin SurgeCube ([bit.ly/belkin374](http://bit.ly/belkin374)), also include a pair of USB sockets, which are useful for charging phones and tablets directly. Check the output of the ports because they may provide more power than a standard USB charging plug, which means devices will charge more quickly.



*Belkin's SurgeCube protects devices from mains spikes and power surges*

### Not all USB ports are equal

The USB ports on a computer aren't always the best way to charge your mobile phone or tablet because they may not all deliver sufficient power. USB 2 sockets, which are the most common type found on PCs and laptops, only deliver 0.5A or 2.5W. Even if this is enough to charge your mobile device, it will take a lot longer than when it's plugged into its own charger.

USB 3 sockets provide 0.9A or 4.5W of power, which is nearly twice as much as USB 2. Your PC might have a mixture of the two, but they aren't always easy to tell apart. The 'tongue' inside a USB 3



*Some PCs and laptops come with USB ports that can charge your device faster*

socket should be blue instead of black, but if you read the documentation that came with the computer, you may find a diagram labelling the sockets so you can see which are USB 3. If you want to charge your devices as quickly as possible, always use USB 3.

Some PCs and laptops have a designated USB charging port that provides more power than the others, which can be up to 1.5A or 7.5W. That isn't quite as much as some chargers,

but it's still better than a standard USB port, so find out if your PC or laptop is equipped with one.

### Choose the right charger

If you own more than one device from a company, don't presume that all its chargers are the same. The Apple



*Apple's iPad charger is bulkier than the iPhone charger but it's the fastest way to charge the company's mobile devices*

**If you see words that look like they've been typed in a typewriter, follow the instructions and type them exactly as they appear, paying close attention to spaces and punctuation.**



iPhone charger delivers 1A/5W. So if you plug an iPhone into a standard USB 3 or lesser socket (0.9A/4.5W), it won't charge as quickly, though it can charge faster in a PC's dedicated charging port (1.5A/7.5W). iPad chargers are rated at 2.4A/12W, which will get an iPhone to full power much more quickly than using its own charger.

If you are going on holiday and are taking your iPad and iPhone, you don't need to take both chargers. One will do and you're best off taking the iPad's. The iPhone charger can be used with an iPad, but it is not recommended because it takes a long time and the charger gets hot.

### Leave it while it's charging

A laptop, phone or tablet uses a lot more power for work, games and browsing the internet than when it's idle with the screen turned off. Using a device while it's charging means it will take longer to power up the battery, which is worth knowing if you are late for work or are going out for the day and don't have much time to charge a device that's run out of power.



*Switching your device off can make it charge more quickly*

If you stop using your device, it will charge more quickly. Close the laptop's lid and put it into sleep mode or, better still, charge it while it is switched off. A phone or tablet can be put into flight mode to speed up charging. This turns off Wi-Fi, 3G, data and so on, leaving more power to charge up the battery.

A device will charge faster when it's turned off, but turning it off and then turning it back on again requires more power than leaving a device idle. So if you only have 10 minutes to get the maximum charge into a device, put it in flight mode, turn off the screen and let it idle. If you have half an hour or more, you can power it down, charge it, then power it up afterwards to get the maximum benefit.

## TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

### Get a better charger

You don't have to charge your device with the charger that it originally came supplied with. There are lots of chargers available to buy from other manufacturers and, because most smartphones and tablets now use USB ports for charging, compatibility isn't the problem it used to be. You're no longer stuck with having to use a



*You don't have to use the charger that came with your device*

charger that only fits your model's precise shape and size of socket. However, you should take note of the maximum Amps and Watts that are delivered by the charger because higher numbers mean faster charging. Be aware, too, that a phone or tablet has a maximum charge rate, so a super-powerful charger may not be any quicker than one with a lower output that already delivers all that the device needs.

Laptop chargers are usually very similar, are typically 60 to 90W and often use a standard plug that fits into the computer, but watch out for very cheap chargers, especially if you're buying online or privately. Models that have been designed and built abroad may not adhere to the same safety standards that are required of products sold in the UK, so check that they comply with all UK safety regulations. Look for brand names, manufacturer names and CE marks. They don't guarantee safety but they are usually found on products that have a better quality of build and design.

### Fast at first then slow

Modern battery-powered devices don't charge at a fixed rate. If the battery level is low, they charge quickly at first, but then slow down when approaching full charge. If the battery is down to 10 per cent or less, you can get it up to 80 per cent in a short time. If you are in a rush to go out, don't wait for that last 20 per cent because progress to the full 100 per cent will be significantly slower.

### Charging on the go

A charger that plugs into a car's power socket is an essential gadget to keep in your vehicle. Depending on the car, the charger socket might work even when the engine is off, so it's best to unplug the charger when it's not being used and only plug it in when it's needed, otherwise it could drain the car's battery (albeit very slowly) when the car is parked.

Some phones are sealed, making the battery inaccessible, but if you have a device where the back cover is removable, you might want to buy a spare battery and keep it charged up. The alternative is an emergency charger. This is a small, portable device that houses a rechargeable battery and has a USB socket that you can plug the phone into to charge it up. They cost anywhere from £5 to £50, and their capacity to store charge is measured in mAh (milliamps per hour). The bigger the number, the more charge it holds, and the more times it can charge your phone or tablet. A cheap one might be 2,500mAh, but a bigger and heavier one could provide up to 11,000mAh, which is enough to charge four iPhone 5S. Check the output Amps and Watts to estimate the charging speed.



*The PNY PowerPack 5200 is a mid-range emergency charger for phones and tablets*

# Ask the Expert

**Roland Waddilove**, computer programmer and PC journalist since 1981, answers all your technical questions. Email us for help at [webuser@dennis.co.uk](mailto:webuser@dennis.co.uk)



## GENERAL PC

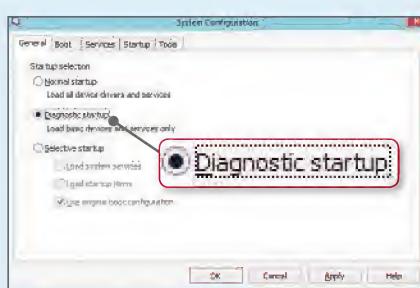
### Windows stalls on start-up

**Q** Every time I boot up my Samsung Core i3 laptop and enter my password, the screen goes blank for a few seconds, then turns pale blue. This lasts between 5 and 20 seconds, after which the welcome screen opens as usual. My laptop is about three years old, but this only started happening quite recently.

**Phil Reading, via email**

**A** Windows loads several programs and services after the login screen appears and before the Desktop loads. It sounds like one of these is taking a long time and Windows is pausing the startup process to compensate. There are hundreds of possible startup programs, drivers and services, so we can't say exactly which one might be causing the delay.

One simple test is to press Windows+R, type **msconfig** then press Enter. Select the General tab, choose 'Diagnostic startup' and click OK. Restart Windows to see if you still



Select 'Diagnostic startup' to eliminate all unnecessary startup items when

get the pale blue screen. If you don't, then it is definitely down to one of the items listed on the Startup tab or the Services tab (after hiding all Microsoft entries). There is no easy way to find the culprit, so you will just have to disable and enable each one in turn and reboot your laptop to test it.

If, after disabling everything, you still get the blue screen, you'll just have to update everything and hope that fixes the problem. Go to Windows Update in the Control Panel and check for updates. Optional ones aren't installed automatically, so select them all and update Windows. Get SlimDrivers ([bit.ly/slim374](http://bit.ly/slim374)) and download and install any available driver updates. Finally, make sure all the software on your PC is up to date.

itself and you're simply having problems with restoring files, there are some other ways to access them. Log into the website using a browser and try downloading the files from there. If you can view a photo online, right-click it in the browser and save it to your hard drive. This is a laborious process, but you only need to use it on the problematic images. There are also mobile apps for Android and iOS, so try using these for files that you can't download using the PC software.



If SurDoc's PC software doesn't show backed-up images properly, see if they appear in the app

## HARDWARE

### Flash drive doesn't appear in Explorer

**Q** A friend gave me a USB flash drive to store files on, but when I plug it into my computer, nothing happens. I cannot see it anywhere. Shouldn't it appear in Explorer so I can copy files to it? Is it faulty or do I need to install drivers to make it work? If it's a driver problem, where can I download them from?

**Paul Baker, via email**

**A** The problem could be that your online storage space is locked. You may not have realised it, but SurDoc only provides 100GB of free online storage space for backups for one year. On the annual renewal date, the company limits access to your files and you must invite friends to join in order to maintain free access. Each friend unlocks 10GB of your 100GB account. If this is what's happening to you, you'll need to invite more friends or upgrade to a paid account.

Assuming the service hasn't locked

Open an Explorer window, right-click This PC or Computer, and select Manage. Under the Storage heading on the left, click Disk Management. To the right, it shows a list of all the disks and

## ONLINE STORAGE

### Get files from SurDoc

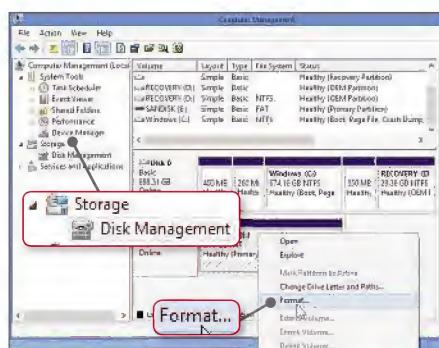
**Q** I used SurDoc ([www.surdock.com](http://www.surdock.com)) to back up my NAS drive because it promised 100GB of free storage. However, I noted some time ago that some of the files on my NAS were missing, though I couldn't work out why. The files, mainly photos, were still on SurDoc, but when I tried to download them, I found they were just blank images. I can view other photos on my computer and I can usually view photos on the web.

I had very little success using SurDoc's PC software to download my photos - some downloaded fine but others were given an '.fc' extension and wouldn't open. Some have an error, yet they are



partitions that Windows can detect, which includes ones that aren't accessible to Explorer.

If you don't have a graphical view of the drives in the bottom half of the window, go to the menu and choose View, Bottom, Graphical View. A USB flash drive might be labelled Disk 1. If it's there, right-click it. If the Delete Volume option is available, use it to delete everything on the drive. Afterwards, right-click it and select 'New simple volume'. Several windows appear, but you can accept the default settings and just click Next. The drive is formatted and will now be ready for use.



**Use Disk Management to prepare disk drives and flash drives for use**

## PHOTOS

### Add a signature to your pictures

**Q** Is there a simple way to insert some text or a signature into my photos?

**Tony Doherty, via email**

**A** If you use a photo organiser or editor, it might already have this facility. For example, in Google Picasa ([picasa.google.com](http://picasa.google.com)) you can select a group of photos and click Export in the photo tray. Tick the 'Add watermark' box, type the text, then export the photos.

If you don't have any software for adding a watermark, try My Watermark (free from [bit.ly/mark374](http://bit.ly/mark374)). You can enter some text, select the font, size, colour and position, then apply it to a whole folder of photos with one mouse click. The watermarked photos can be saved with a different filename ('\_wm.jpg' is added to the name) to the same folder or to a subfolder, so that the original images are kept unchanged.

## INTERNET

### Wi-Fi won't work

**Q** My Dell 1750 Windows Home Basic PC won't connect to Wi-Fi. It shows a red cross on the icon. My more knowledgeable son and other advisors



**This fortnight Roland has been using Google Photos to try and get his snapshots into some sort of order**



**Ethernet cables offer fast networking very cheaply. This one is just £1 from Amazon**

have tried all the repair and diagnosis steps, checked adapters and so on, and everything is working. They say it shows no faults and I must have somehow told Windows not to connect to Wi-Fi. My son thinks I've turned something off, but can't say what. I miss using my large-screened PC when browsing the web.

**John McLoughlin, via email**

**A** Don't worry, you've probably done nothing wrong and just need to improve your Wi-Fi connection. You can buy a USB Wi-Fi dongle for as little as £7.50. Just plug it into a spare USB port, turn off or disable the built-in Wi-Fi and the new Wi-Fi dongle will work fine.

If your router and laptop are close enough to each other, you could use a LAN or network cable (not the crossover type). Routers have one or more LAN sockets and so does your

laptop. Just connect the two and you won't even need to use Wi-Fi. The cables are very cheap to buy.

## MEDIA

### Vanishing photo thumbnails

**Q** I was tidying up my photo collection by going through images and deleting any I no longer wanted. I used a tool to securely shred them – not that there is anything private in them, I just prefer not to leave files on my PC that can easily be recovered by a thief or hacker. As I was deleting files, I noticed that sometimes one or two were not deleted but remained in the Explorer window and displayed as thumbnail images. When tried to delete them, I got a message to say they could not be found, even though I could see them. I left it and the next day they appeared to have gone. What happened to them?

**Ben Harding, via email**

**A** This is often happens when an Explorer window is open and you are deleting files with another program. Explorer displays all the files in the window as a list or as thumbnails, depending on the view selected. If a program then deletes files, Explorer does not always refresh the view, so it still shows the files as thumbnails.

The solution is to refresh the Explorer window's contents and update the display. Right-click an empty space in the Explorer window and select Refresh.

## MEDIA

### Convert video to DVD

**Q** I'm trying to find a video converter for when I download a film to put onto a disc. I was using WinAVI ([winavi.com](http://winavi.com)) but it's started leaving a watermark, which is not helpful. Can you recommend a program I can install on my Windows 8.1 laptop?

**Eugene Bowen, via email**

**A** It sounds like you have a free trial version of WinAVI and paying the registration fee will no doubt remove the watermark. If you are looking for a free alternative, try WinX DVD Author ([bit.ly/winx374](http://bit.ly/winx374)) or DVDStyler ([www.dvdstyler.org](http://www.dvdstyler.org)). Both have similar features and they import a wide range of popular video file formats, such as AVI, MOV, MP4, MPEG, OGG, and



**Turn your home videos into DVD movies using WinX DVD Author**

WMV. Add DVD menus that include text, pictures, buttons and music, then save the disc image or burn it direct to a DVD-R to play on a DVD player and TV.

DVDStyler hosts its downloads on SourceForge, which Chrome now displays a malware warning for because the site bundles some of its downloads in an installer that includes adware. However, we downloaded it anyway and found it to be clean.

# Your Top Tips

Our pick of the best advice from our readers. To get help or offer it to others, visit [forum.webuser.co.uk](http://forum.webuser.co.uk)

## TOP TIP

### BROWSERS

#### Erase unwanted Firefox history

If you have a recent version of Firefox, you can add a useful privacy button to the toolbar to cover your tracks while browsing. It's handy for when you click links on websites and end up somewhere you would rather not be. A quick click of the privacy button and you can erase it from your browsing history.

Go to the menu button in Firefox and click Customise at the bottom. On the left is 'Additional Tools and Features'. Among the items is a button called Forget. Click and drag it to the toolbar at the right side of the address box and drop it. Exit



A couple of clicks is all it takes to erase your browsing history in Firefox

Customise mode and click the button to see the menu. You can erase the last five minutes, two hours or 24 hours.

Alan Pilley, via email

### GENERAL PC

#### Make games faster and more responsive

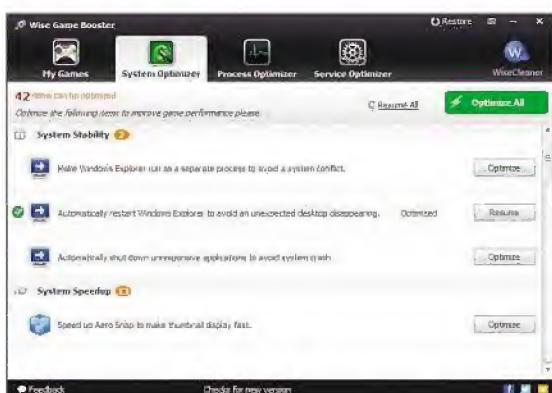
New PCs work brilliantly for a while, but they then seem to get slower and slower as they age. By the time your PC is a year or two old, it might be struggling to run the latest software, especially games, which can be very demanding. However,

you can give your old PC a boost by tweaking a few settings.

For example, if I am playing an app from the Windows Store, I change the screen resolution to 1,366 x 768 pixels rather than the screen's normal 1,920 x 1,080 pixels. Windows 8 apps with fast animation run more smoothly, although the pixels are a bit bigger. Right-click the

Desktop and select 'Screen resolution' to change it.

Most viruses come from email attachments and browsing the web. When you are immersed in a game, you aren't accessing either of these so it's safe to temporarily disable your anti-virus software. Right-click the icon in the taskbar. Mine has an on/off switch, but others have options to disable for 10, 30, 60



Wise Game Booster isn't just for gamers; it will optimise for any performance-sensitive software



minutes and so on. Don't forget to switch your anti-virus back on afterwards.

My third tip is to use a game booster and my favourite is Wise Game Booster ([bit.ly/wise374](http://bit.ly/wise374)). It shows all the system tweaks you can make to speed up the PC, any background tasks and services that can be stopped, and so on. It optimises your PC for playing games, while you need it, and can also be useful if you're using other programs that need a boost.

B Hughes, via email

### EMAIL

#### Archive Outlook email

If your email inbox is a mess but full of messages that you still want to keep, try archiving them. This clears them from the inbox, but it doesn't delete them. My free Outlook.com account has an Archive link at the top. Select an email you don't want to see but also don't want to delete, and click Archive. The first time you do this you must select a folder or create one. I created one called Archive (for obvious reasons), but it could be anything. Gmail already has an Archive folder.

Now you can select an email, click Archive and it will disappear out of your inbox and into the archive. Select the Archive folder on the left and your archived messages are displayed.

I have never managed to attain the totally empty inbox that some people claim you can or should have, but it has reduced a lot of unnecessary clutter.

Tom Coogan, via email



Outlook lets you create an Archive folder so emails you want to keep aren't cluttering up your inbox



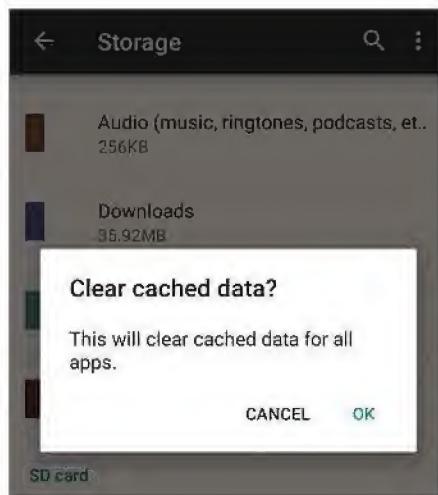
## ANDROID

### Speed up your Android device

My Android phone only has 16GB of storage and can't be expanded using a MicroSD card, so it quickly fills up. This causes the operating system to run slowly and means I can't even install new apps without deleting some files. If this happens to you and you need to quickly free up some space without deleting anything precious, try deleting the Android system cache. Mine frequently accounts for as much as 1GB of space and it can be deleted very easily by opening Settings, Storage, then tapping 'Cached data' and OK. As with a PC, having an Android device that's very full causes it to run slowly, so I find this is a great way of clearing some space and making it run a little faster.

This option doesn't clear all data associated with apps, so if you think a particular app is hogging a lot of space, you can also try deleting all its associated files, settings, accounts and the like, by finding it in the Android apps list and tapping 'Clear data'. Bear in mind that this option will effectively restore the app to its default state, so only use it with apps where most of your valuable data is also saved in the cloud, such as Facebook, Spotify or Dropbox.

**Tom, via email**



*Clearing the cached data on your Android device can help to free up valuable space*

## MAC

### Recover deleted images

Recently, I carried out the Mac OSX Yosemite update that introduced the Desktop Photos app. Catastrophically, it ended up deleting every one of my 15,000 photos. Even my Time Machine backups were missing. I was devastated until a friend suggested that I could try a file-recovery program made by EaseUS ([bit.ly/easeus374](http://bit.ly/easeus374)), a company I recognised from reading *Web User*. I was a little cynical at first, but I had nothing

to lose so thought I would give it a try. After installing the software and scanning my hard drive, it found some 50,000 recoverable images (many of which were presumably thumbnails and temporary files). The program lets you preview all the files and recover up to 2GB worth for free, or you can upgrade to the premium version and recover everything for \$89.95 (around £60).

Because I could see which files were recoverable and didn't need to go through the hassle and expense of sending my Mac off to a data recovery specialist, this fee represented excellent value for money and I was very pleased to be able to recover at least half of my original image library.

**Jessica Webster, via email**



*Use EaseUS Data Recovery Wizard to preview and restore deleted files*

## ANDROID

### Transfer files wirelessly from tablet to PC

Last week, I plugged my Android tablet into my PC, only to discover that the micro USB connection had become faulty. I knew something was wrong because a notification appeared to say that it was charging, but my PC didn't recognise the device. I tried using a different cable, different PC and even reinstalling the manufacturer's drivers, none of which worked, so I knew it was the connection on the device itself.

My tablet is out of warranty, and I wasn't keen on paying any repair fees, so I wondered how else I might be able to transfer large files to my PC without a cable. A quick Google search returned WiFi File Transfer, an Android app ([bit.ly/wifi374](http://bit.ly/wifi374)) that lets you browse your device's file directory from your PC browser. Using this, I was able to back up all my precious files to my PC much more quickly than using a cloud service, because the files are transferred directly from one device to another. Both devices need to be on the same network and there's a 25MB file-size limit when



*WiFi File Transfer lets you access your Android device via your PC's browser*

moving files to your tablet from a PC. If you need to transfer files bigger files, there is a Pro version of the app you can buy for 88p.

I love how easy it is to use and, because it runs wirelessly as a background service, I can carry on using my tablet on the sofa while the files are transferred!

**Graham Pearson, via email**

## WINDOWS 7

### Remove the Windows 10 upgrade notification

If you don't intend to upgrade to Windows 10 when it's released this summer, you'd probably rather the upgrade notification didn't persistently sit in the notification area of your Windows 7 taskbar. Fortunately, there's an easy way to remove it by uninstalling the Windows updates that are responsible for its presence.

Open the Start menu, type programs and features and press Enter. Next, click 'View installed updates' and locate the following updates: 3035583, 2952664, 3021917. Right-click each one and select Uninstall and Restart Later when the prompt appears. Next, restart your PC so that the changes take effect and the irritating Windows 10 icon will have disappeared from your taskbar.

To make sure that the notification doesn't come back, you need to prevent the updates you just deleted from being downloaded again. To do this, open Windows Update from the Start menu, select 'Check for updates', click the 'important update is available' link and right-click the updates mentioned in the previous paragraph, clicking 'Hide update' on each one.

**Darren Jordan, via email**



*You can remove the Windows 10 upgrade notification in Windows Updates*



# Readers' Helpdesk

Our pick of the best solutions posted on our reader forums. Visit [forum.webuser.co.uk](http://forum.webuser.co.uk) – it's friendly and free!

## ANDROID

### Can I remove the pre-installed apps on my Hudl 2?

**Q** I want to remove the apps that came pre-installed on my Tesco Hudl 2 tablet and only keep the ones I frequently use. Is this possible to do this or will removing them cause problems with the operating system?

**fossewayfella, Web User Forums**

**A** What I usually do is go to Settings then Apps, where there are three headings: Downloaded, Running and All. You should be able to remove all the apps that you've downloaded but, at most, you'll only be able to disable the apps that come pre-installed on your device, which has little benefit. However, you can still remove the apps from your home screen by long-pressing them and dragging them upwards.

If you find the Tesco advertising screens irritating, you can avoid looking at them altogether by installing Nova Launcher ([bit.ly/nova374](http://bit.ly/nova374)), which won the Gold award for Android launchers in Issue 362 ([bit.ly/webuser362](http://bit.ly/webuser362)). Nova will also let you hide apps from your app drawer if you like to keep things simple.

**Izzit, Web User Forums and Edward Munn (Web User)**



**Nova Launcher** lets you fully customise the home screens on your Android device

## GENERAL PC

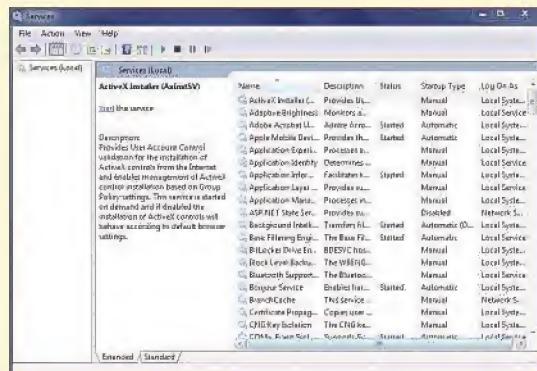
### Which Windows services can be disabled safely?

**Q** Which Windows services can I stop running without causing problems on my PC?

**Parbuster, Web User Forums**

**A** If you're talking about stopping services with the System Configuration tool (press Windows+R, type msconfig then press Enter), you can usually stop all non-Microsoft services. Just remember to tick the box to 'Hide all Microsoft services' before you click the 'Disable all' button. If your anti-virus software is in that list, it will reinstate itself, so you can leave that one ticked or untick it if you prefer.

It's worth noting that you should only disable services using this method if you're troubleshooting. For permanent changes, you should use the Services tool. To access it, open the Start menu, type services.msc, right-click it and click 'Run as administrator'. You can then right-click a service and select Properties, then choose Disabled from the 'Startup



**The Services tool lets you remove any Windows services that you don't need**

type' drop-down menu.

Before you start, it's worth carrying out some research on Windows services. Black Viper's website at [bit.ly/services374](http://bit.ly/services374) provides information about which services can be safely disabled, but I'd recommend you create a system restore point before you make any changes. If you want to know more about Windows services, there's a handy in-depth article on the subject on the How-To Geek website ([bit.ly/howtogeek374](http://bit.ly/howtogeek374)).

**Cantrel and Stewart40, Web User Forums**

## GENERAL PC

### Can I choose when Updates are downloaded?

**Q** Every few weeks, when I turn on my laptop to do a bit of surfing, the pages take ages to load regardless of which browser I use. When I try to reboot, a message appears saying "do not power off, installations are in progress" or words to that effect. I know these updates are necessary but can I choose when they're downloaded?

**kingfisher171, Web User Forums**

**A** When updates for Windows download and install automatically,

they can slow down your browsing. However, you can take charge and set times for when you want Windows to download them. In Windows 7, open the Start menu, type windows update and press Enter. Click 'Change settings' in the left pane, use the drop-down menu to change to 'Check for updates but let me choose when to download and install them', then press OK. A pop-up balloon in the System Tray tells you when there are updates ready to download. You can then have a look to see how many and what they are. This should stop the annoying alert when you shut down.

**Cantrel, Web User Forums**

## Star Email

# Stop neglecting Windows Phone users

I was drawn to Issue 372 of *Web User* ([bit.ly/webuser372](http://bit.ly/webuser372)) because of its bold claim on the cover: "Record anything on any device" and, beneath it, the clarification: "PC, laptop, phone, tablet & iPad". I turned to the cover article and scoured each item for mention of my smartphone of choice, Windows Phone 8. No such luck. Now, I wouldn't expect you to include outdated and prehistoric platforms in your article, but surely those that are modern and up-to-date deserve coverage.

Unfortunately, it appears that the writers of *Web User* suffer



from the same narrow vision and superiority complex that is so prevalent with users of Android and Apple devices (especially Apple users). I have often heard insults from Apple fans declaring the shortcomings of the Microsoft platform, but I have used the other formats and I've never been as happy with another device as I am with my Windows Phone.

One of the main criticisms I've heard is that "there aren't as many apps available on Windows Phone". Well, of course there aren't! Windows Phone 8 is much

younger than its Apple and Google counterparts. In order to catch up, it needs support from developers to produce apps. Did you know that you can download the means to develop your own apps, completely free of charge, using Microsoft Visual Studio? Guidance and tutorials are also available from Microsoft's Virtual Academy, also free of charge.

Let's try not to make claims we can't keep. If you purport to write an article relating to 'any' device, please remember to include 'any' device. Kudos for including Linux in the mix, but then Linux is paraded as an exclusive fashion statement by the skinny-cords brigade anyway. Microsoft may be uncool in your eyes, but that's no excuse to exclude its very popular smartphone platform.

*Samuel Jones, via email*

## My smart TV takes me back to my childhood

In answer to Chris Pritchard's comments about smart TVs in Issue 372 ('Does anyone actually use smart TV features?'). I am closer to 80 than 79 and I have had the net since before broadband was invented. About two months ago, I bought a smart TV and spent many hours playing about with it to see what it can do. I hit on the idea of setting up my email account on the smart TV to receive my three newsletters about classic films. Admittedly, the email app is a bit clunky but now all I have to do is open the newsletters, click the links and I am transported back to my boyhood films in Saturday matinees such as *Hopalong Cassidy* and Flash Gordon battling Ming the Merciless.

That is why I eat raw carrots while watching TV. I was a boy during the war years and with no sweets to munch on back then, Mum would give us apples or carrots while watching the films.

The night before last, I watched three George Formby films directly on my TV without burning them to DVD. I have found that I can do so many things with my smart TV that I think I will cancel my subscription to Sky.

*Wyndham Jones, via email*

## Our 'smart' TV got sent back to the shop

Reading Barry Collins' column in Issue 371 ([bit.ly/webuser371](http://bit.ly/webuser371)), 'So-called smart TVs make fools of us all', I found myself nodding in agreement.

Our woeful tale of buying a 'smart' TV began last Christmas when my hubby and I decided to treat ourselves to a smart TV from Argos because we wanted access to BBC iPlayer. All was fine until a few months later when, for some strange reason, the iPlayer app didn't appear on the screen. It had been taken off!

We'd paid over £300 for the TV, so we



contacted Argos and explained the problem. Because Argos couldn't reinstate the app, the product was not fit for purpose. Since it was less than six months since our purchase, they agreed to refund us in full and collect the TV. My hubby was so incensed about the iPlayer disappearing that he shared our experience on an online forum.

That forum belonged to *Which?* magazine. They were impressed with his rant and wanted to publish it in their paper magazine. Not only that, but he was awarded 'Star letter' status. His prize was a whopping £100 Amazon gift voucher! And what did he buy with the gift voucher? A plug-in dongle and a diddy keyboard to control it with.



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winner**

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⋮

Because we'd kept our old TV, we could now access the iPlayer app, as well as installing other Android apps, and it didn't cost us a single penny!

*Sharon Boothroyd, via email*

## My smart TV sounds better than it looks

I don't use Facebook or stuff like that on my smart TV, but I did use YouTube until the app was discontinued on my Sony smart TV. This ended up being a good thing because it prompted me to buy a Chromecast and I can now watch any video I want. The same couldn't be said for the YouTube app on my TV,



where the selection of videos seemed to be limited.

I also get great sound quality on my TV because I have a surround-sound system hooked up to it, so I don't suffer from the "mumbling" syndrome that everyone complained about while watching *Jamaica Inn* (pictured)!

If I bought a TV again, I wouldn't be so bothered about smart features, but back in 2010, smart TVs were cutting edge. Technology advances so fast these days. Everything is out of date six months later. First it was HD, now it's Ultra HD. I try to keep up as best I can!

*Lynn Sharpe, via email*



thousands more to choose from. There are also some sites that many people think nobody should see, such as porn, but this again is up to the individual.

If music and film companies want people to buy content from them rather than downloading it from torrent sites, then they must cut their prices. Look at the cost of renting from Netflix and other media-streaming services.

What we have to consider these days is the shelf life of digital media. Like cars coming off showroom floors, films and music albums quickly depreciate in value but there is always another one coming out. No Western government would completely shut down the internet, so why are we worrying?

*Terry Bradley, Milton Keynes*

## Blocked sites are nothing to worry about

Regarding your article in Issue 371, 'Access sites blocked in the UK', in today's techy world are we really worried about being blocked? The government shows how powerful it is by blocking some sites, but can they really get away with it? The answer is 'no'. The internet is an open platform and if you cannot get what you want from one site there are

## What you say...

### WILL YOU UPGRADE TO WINDOWS 10 WHEN IT'S RELEASED ON 29 JULY?

Yep, I've already reserved my slot.  
*Si Mellor*

Not sure yet. I have just one Windows computer left and it's a production machine. Will probably give it a whirl in a virtual machine prior to committing.

*James McGinnis*

I'm all over it like a tramp on a bag of chips. It's much easier on the eye. Navigating around should be a return to simpler times.

*DLee @dlee1*

Dunno. I have Windows 7, which I'm happy with.

*Jack @imthegoldmaster*

I think I will stick with Windows 7. The software I use (InDesign, Photoshop and so on) might not be compatible with Windows 10.

*Rob Goldring*

### WOULD YOU STOP USING NETFLIX IF IT STARTED SHOWING ADS?

That depends. Do I get a discount? I would take an ad-supported version if it was a cheaper option.

*Leopold Hans Birkholm*

Yes! They already get paid, is that not enough?

*Richard Bond*

I would pay for a service without ads, but a free service with ads would be good.

*Ross MacGillivray @rossmacgill*

Yes. I already pay for a premium service. I should not have to watch adverts as I do on free services such as YouTube. If I started having to watch adverts, I would consider cancelling my subscription.

*Peter Fitzsimmons*

Ads are okay if the service is free, but that's not the case with Netflix.

*Davor Prcovich*

### WILL YOU SWAP FROM SPOTIFY TO APPLE MUSIC?

I will cancel my subscription with Spotify for three months and see how I get on. I may not be back!

*Bruce Lauderdale*

No way. Swap to Apple's rip-off greed merchants? Never!

*Chris Cole*

Ha! Nah, even though I've stopped paying for Spotify, I'm using MixRadio ([www.mixradiomusic.com](http://www.mixradiomusic.com)) these days.

*Kisz @Kiszcat*



## Google's cars are much safer than ours

Regarding the Barry Collins column about Google's self-driving cars in Issue 373 ([bit.ly/webuser373](http://bit.ly/webuser373)). If you compare the frequency of accidents rather than casualties, which isn't relevant because Google car accidents have caused no injuries, then the Google cars had an accident every 154,345 miles, as opposed to an accident every 2,184 miles, which is the average for British roads. This is according to my interpretation of the Department of Transport's figures for estimated vehicle miles and reported accidents in 2013. That makes Google



It's certainly worth a try, what with the huge number of songs it's promising. This could be the final nail in the coffin for CDs, though.

*Apple Jack*

## APPLE HAS REMOVED THE IPOD FROM ITS STORE MENU. WHEN DID YOU LAST USE YOURS?

It is the only Apple device I own. It's not perfect (there's no mono setting), but it lets me take my whole music collection with me anywhere on its 160GB (148GB actual) hard drive. The iPod is still very popular so I am surprised that the company would choose to kill it off.

*Shaun Vaughan*

It's easier just to get Spotify, which lets you listen to anything on your phone without having to download it.

*Paul Emsley*

I use mine every time I am in the car!

*Robin Sims*

cars 70 times safer.

*Alistair Newton, via email*

## How to spot a fake customer review

Barry Collins is right to draw attention to the increasing problem of fake customer reviews on websites such as Amazon (Page 404, Issue 372). However, you can usually spot if a review is a genuine one or has been paid for by the company behind the product. For a start, the review is likely to be overly positive, with a five-star rating but no real justification for why or any mention of specific details. So

you get vague statements like "superb purchase" or "worth every penny" that don't explain why the 'customer' enjoyed the product. Keep an eye out as well for reviewers who use the same words and phrases in multiple reviews, because it gives them an easy way to make a fast buck!

*James Riley, via email*



## Beware of data charges for secret streaming

My elderly father recently received a bill from his landline provider charging him an additional £140 for exceeding his quarterly broadband data limit. This was completely unexpected since he is an infrequent user of the internet and, for that reason, had chosen a limited-usage broadband contract.

Having investigated the possible causes, it seems that the excessive usage coincided with his installation of a media streamer (Roku) and I strongly suspect that the source of the high data usage originates from the default autoplay feature on the YouTube app.

The scenario goes like this: you play what you think is a single YouTube clip, then you switch off your TV. Since the streamer is always on, the YouTube app is still automatically downloading clips in the background, *ad infinitum*. I'd like to know how YouTube and Roku respond to this and whether anyone else has had a similar experience.

I am also disappointed that the Internet Service Provider did not restrict my father's broadband capacity above a certain excessive-use level, nor did they inform him of unusually high data usage. My father has since switched to an unlimited contract, but we are still wary of reconnecting the media streamer.

*S Mowforth, via email*

I think I last used my iPod about two years ago! My son uses mine now for his music.

*Joanne Evans*

## WHICH PIECE OF TECHNOLOGY COULD YOU NOT LIVE WITHOUT?

My iPhone, iPad Wi-Fi and Amazon Fire TV.

*Dave Harris @godsquad1am*

I couldn't live without Wi-Fi, 3G/4G and having the option of being online 'on the go', wherever I happen to be! I wish this wonderful technology had been available when I was a young lass!

*Caroline Sharman*

The internet, of course!

*Stefan Carter*

My kettle. I'd be lost without my five cups of tea a day!

*Jennifer Myers*



# ! Page 404

Barry Collins thinks instruction manuals for gadgets leave a lot to be desired



## Too much manual labour is bad for you

**Y**our shiny new gadget arrives from Amazon. You rip open the box, turf out the polystyrene packaging (which, by the way, will never go back in exactly the same way ever again) and set about charging the battery. You switch it on and within five minutes you're stuck. It won't connect to your Wi-Fi, you can't work out what that squiggly symbol means and it's not doing exactly what it says on the blinkin' tin.

So, you start hunting for the manual. If you're luckier than a EuroMillions winner, you might find a printed manual in the box. In all likelihood, you'll only have a CD-ROM or a link to download the manual from the manufacturer's website.

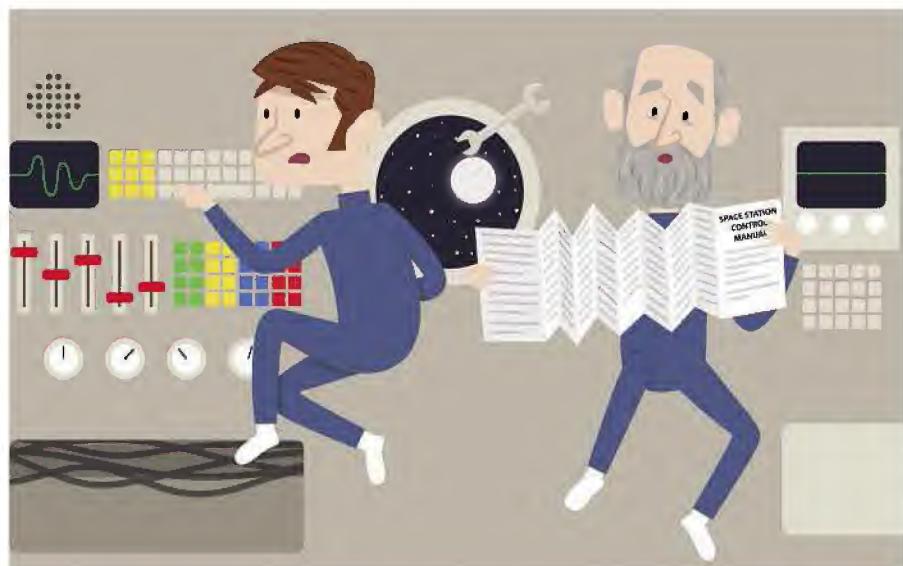
Despite being an electronic manual, the manufacturer is too darned lazy to separate the PDF into separate languages, so you have to download a ridiculously large file and wade through pages of Mandarin, German and Japanese before you get to the English instructions. Once you've started reading them, you realise you might as well have stopped at the Mandarin, for all the sense they're making.

They've seemingly been translated from Korean using a combination of Google Translate and Yoda.

"Respectfully plug wire USB into port D, you will."

Even if the English is a cut above pidgin, the manual is rarely much help. It might tell you what button F does or how to engage the Ultra High Super Definition widescreen mode, but it doesn't tell you *why* you should use them or when.

When I'm not writing faintly jingoistic



columns in the back of *Web User*, I'm teaching people how to use their digital cameras. The most common reason people book one of my courses is that they've bought a new camera and read the manual, but still haven't got a clue what to do with it. They've now got a £500 digital SLR with

more controls than the International Space Station but they end up leaving it in automatic mode because they're too

intimidated by the instruction manual to do anything else.

Sure, the manual will tell them how to flick it into shutter-priority mode (marked 'TV' on Canon cameras, just to crank up the confusion), but it won't tell them *why* they might want to do so. It doesn't explain the difference between an exposure of three seconds and three

one-thousandths of a second or when and why they might ever want to choose such settings. It just explains they're there, and leaves the bewildered camera owner to figure it out for themselves.

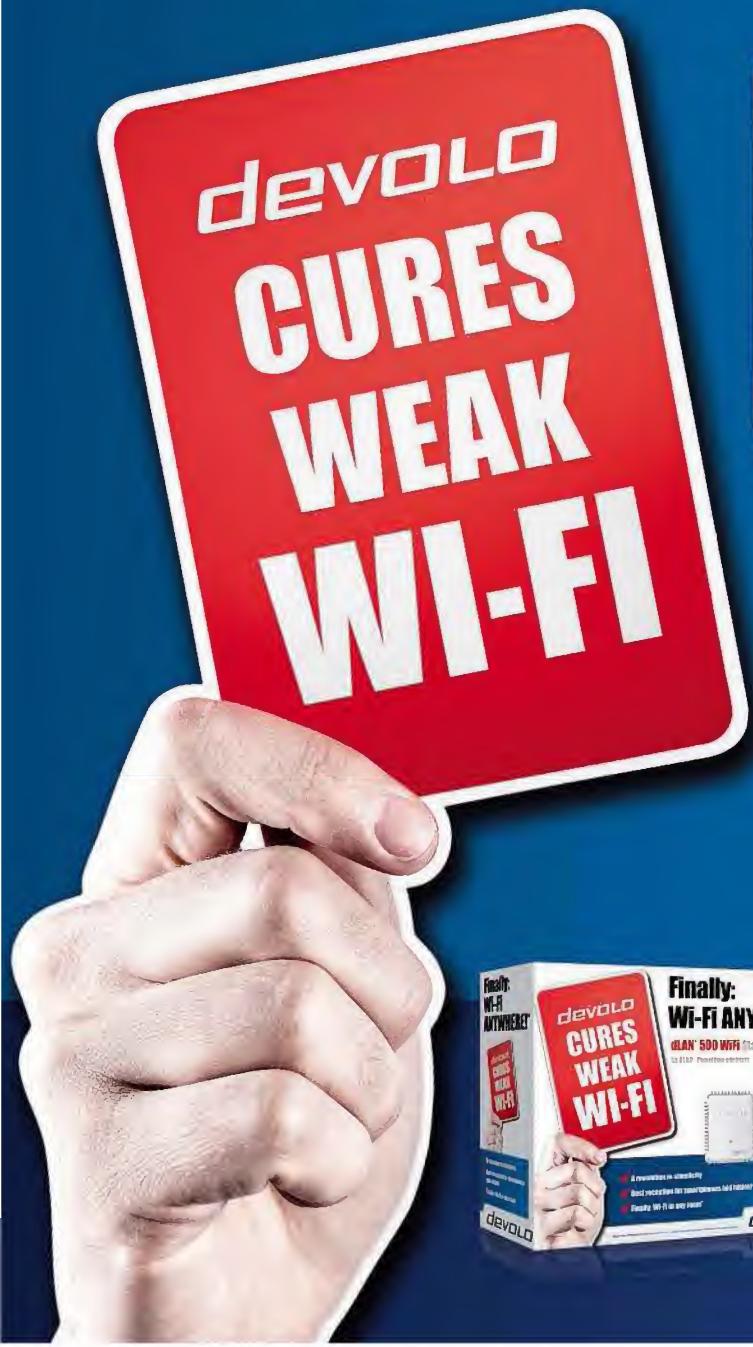
There's a reason for the thriving market in MagBooks that explain how to use devices such as Android phones, the Raspberry Pi and even gadgets as rudimentary as the Apple Watch, and that's because the manufacturers do such an appalling job of explaining how these gadgets work in the first place. I was once told by a well-placed source that Apple believes its devices are so simple to use that they don't need a manual, but judging by the number of guides to using the iPhone and iPad out there, it's clearly falling short of that rather arrogant ambition.

Manufacturers need to put much more effort into their manuals to make them readable, task-oriented and not weighed down with jargon. Until they do, my jobs as a tech writer and photography instructor are safe for a good while yet.

**“**Most manuals seem to have been translated from Korean using a combination of Google Translate and Yoda **”**

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